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Gamecube shots you have to see to believe!
38 PAGES OF LAUNCH REVIEWS!
WE FIND THE BEST GAME BARGAINS!
YOUR GC HIGH-SCORES REWARDED!
PLUS!
DRIVEN: THE MOVIE
WIN STACKS OF NGC GEAR
ISS 2: WE'VE PLAYED IT!
N64: THE OBITUARY



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Issue 67 May 2002

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Next issue on sale
Monday 13th May
To find out why it's going to be fantastic, jump to p82

WELCOME TO



The eagle-eyed among you may have already noticed that we haven't reviewed *Star Wars: Rogue Leader* (or, in fact, every single Gamecube launch game), as promised last issue. Well, there's a good reason for that. In the case of *Rogue Leader*, we could have reviewed it this issue, but then we dreamt up something so brilliant, so devilish, so downright Star Wars-ey for next issue (remember, the film is out around about the time our June issue hits the shelves) that we simply *had* to hold it over. Believe us when we say the wait will be worth it. Fear not, though – there's two things you can do. First up, you can check out our import review of *Rogue Leader* in NGC/63 to see what we made of the US version, and then secondly you can nip to page 82, see what we've got planned for next month's monstrous issue and get that on sale date – May 13th, by the way – carved lightsaber-like into your brain. Because in 29 days, things get *really* good.

Plenty but not twenty

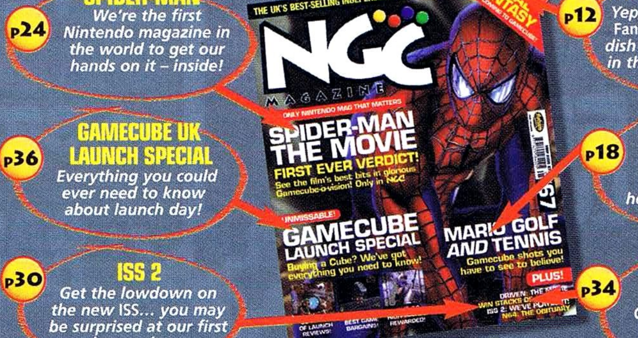
As for the other thing – the entire Gamecube line-up thing – well, unfortunately, that was beyond our control. Fact is, not everyone made review copies available to us, despite us pursuing them relentlessly for several weeks (take a bow EA, Activision, Konami and Ubi Soft), so we'll be casting our beady eyes over *FIFA*, *ISS*, *Spider-Man* and *Donald Duck Quack Attack* next issue. Again, though, we've come up with the goods: we've played *Spider-Man* and *ISS* to bits this issue, and you can read our initial impressions to see whether they're worth keeping some cash aside for. As for the others – *Gauntlet Dark Legacy*, *SSX Tricky* and *Batman Dark Tomorrow* – well, they've been (some would say inevitably) delayed. Why? No one seems to know, but the good news for fans of *Gauntlet* is that it's not going to be far behind its original 3rd May date, so we'll definitely have a review of that one next time.

Green means go

Despite all the excitement of Gamecube's launch, this month has actually been quite sad too, not least because Greener's calling a day on NGC. Yep, after 20-odd issues, he's off to join his old friend David Gosen at Nintendo's Frankfurt offices. So, good luck, Greener! (And thanks for leaving us in the dwang, idiot. I can't wait for the moment you crawl back begging for your job you– *Snip!*)

TIM WEAVER, EDITOR

JUST LOOK WHAT WE'VE GOT FOR YOU THIS MONTH!



OUR PROMISE TO YOU

Because we're not tied to Nintendo, only NGC can deliver the most reliable news and reviews first. We answer to no-one except you, the reader, which is why we promise you can trust what you read – every single issue.



THE UK'S BEST-SELLING INDEPENDENT NINTENDO MAG

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ISSUE 67, MAY 2002

FUTURE LOOKS

Latest pics of the big games!



NEWSDESK

Proper news – first!





NEWS PLUS

More on issues that matter.

COMING SOON

Updates on the big titles!



NGC EXCLUSIVE!

FUTURE LOOK
Your first look at the big games

It's all looking very colourful, but those background textures need some work...

MARIO

Slowly but surely, everyone's favourite plumber is starting to show his true colours. Courtesy of Shigeru Miyamoto's whirlwind tour of Europe, progress on Mario's latest adventure was revealed – with some very pleasing results.

The most important revelation of them all was the purpose of Mario's mysterious backpack. As we mentioned in last month's news, the device strapped to Mazza's back is a water-blaster that's used to clean up oily splodges that fall from the sky. Thing is,

INFO BURST

MARIO SUNSHINE	
DEVELOPER:	Nintendo
PUBLISHER:	Nintendo
HOW MANY PLAYERS:	1
RUMBLE FUNCTION:	Yes
ONLINE PLAY:	No
NUMBER OF DISCS:	1
GBA LINK-UP:	TBA

WHEN'S IT OUT?

US	UK	Japan
2002	2002	2002

ANTICIPATION RATING



A boss encounter? We're not so sure. In the video footage we saw it seemed like an ally or, at the very least, a creature in need.



Many abilities make a comeback. At the tree's top, survey your expansive and crystal-clear surroundings.

The animation on Mario is nothing short of wonderful, and that cheeky little face of his is more expressive than ever. We love him.

SUNSHINE

backpack in the game

we're still in the dark as to why exactly this is. Translations of an article in weekly Japanese games mag Famitsu indicate that the story is as follows: Princess Peach is on holiday on an island when large, er, scribbles appear. It's up to Mario to clean up the mess so the Princess can enjoy the rest of her vacation. Not exactly the most thrilling of storylines, it has to be said – we're a little sceptical of the translation and there's no doubt far more to it – but at least it doesn't involve rescuing old Peachy from that angry fire-breathing tortoise *yet again*, and it also goes some way to explaining why Mario is running around a digital representation of Marbella.

As far as the important bit goes (the game itself) *Mario Sunshine* will be more of an evolution of the gameplay found in *Mario 64*. Many of the fella's original skills return, such as wall-jumping and tree-climbing, and features from older *Mario* titles are back, too – such as the rotating punchable fences from *Super Mario World* on the Super Nintendo Entertainment System.

Since we last saw it, *Mario Sunshine* has gone through a fair number of changes. To start with, there are far more objects and enemies in the massive 3D environments, the water and sun indicators in the corner of the screen have undergone a redesign, and pretty much *everything* looks that much more colourful and vibrant than the footage we saw at Spaceworld 2001. As per usual, Shigsy is still tight-lipped about any specific details, but he reassures us that *Mario Sunshine* will be ready to play at May's E3 show, and should be making its way to homes worldwide by the end of the year. NGC

Mario Sunshine will be more of an evolution of _Mario 64_'s gameplay.



Look familiar? It's those fences from the Koopa castles in Super Mario World. No sign of any climbing Koopas, though…

FUTURE LOOK
Your first look at the big games

The car characteristics in Driven are actually determined by the character you choose.

DRIVEN

sly driver sneaks in for launch...



INFO BURST	
DRIVEN	
DEVELOPER:	Bam!
PUBLISHER:	Bam!
HOW MANY PLAYERS:	2
RUMBLE FUNCTION:	Yes
ONLINE PLAY:	No
NUMBER OF DISCS:	1
GBA LINK-UP:	No

WHEN'S IT OUT?

US	UK	Japan
May	3rd May	TBA

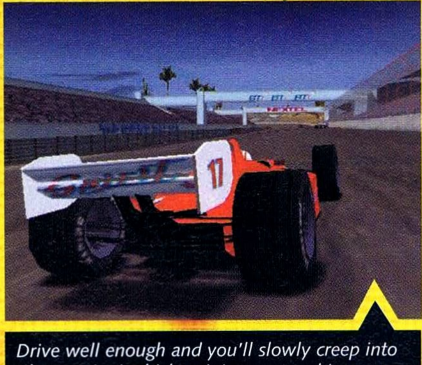
ANTICIPATION RATING



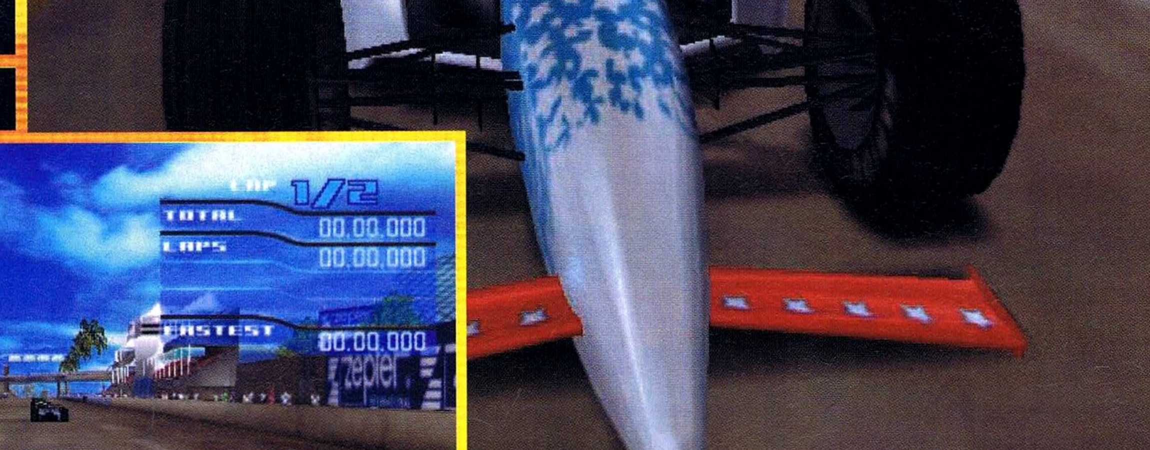
Based on last year's Sylvester Stallone film, *Driven* follows the exploits of hot rookie driver Jimmy Bly and his veteran racing coach Joe Tanto, as they attempt to be dominate the indy car circuit.

So it's a racing game then, but it's by no means a burn-round-the-track-and-win-type scenario. Bam! are delivering a racer that's both challenge and plot driven. This is thanks to a refreshing 'story mode' that requires players to complete set objectives in order to progress. Instead of just coming out on top, you'll be set progressively difficult objectives, such as blocking certain characters from overtaking, insane chase challenges where you have to catch up with your rival in busy city streets, or beating strict time limits over a set number of laps.

As far as initial impressions go, *Driven*'s not too bad at all. Being a strictly no-frills

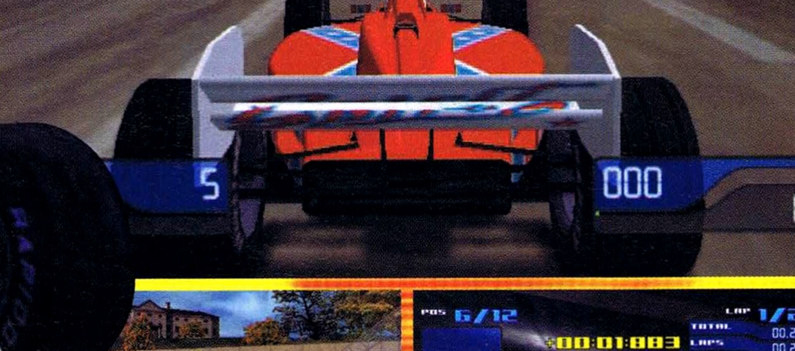


Drive well enough and you'll slowly creep into 'the zone', at which point your speed increases.



Bam! had the script for Driven ages ago, so the game sticks very close to the story of the film.

There are eight tracks in total, ranging from city streets to your basic indy-style oval.



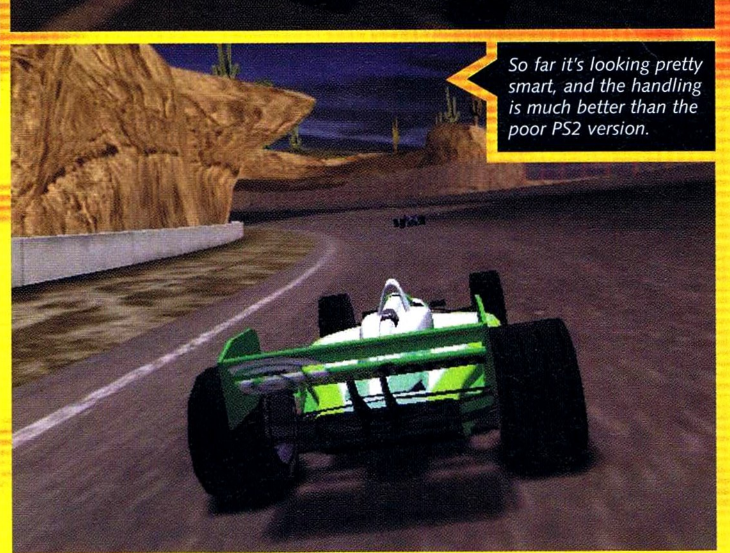
The story mode requires you to fulfil certain criteria, like beating times or rivals.



The rival cars all behave differently – some of them are very erratic.

arcade racer it lacks the wealth of options and tracks available in games such as *Gran Turisimo* – but then that's not what the game's trying to achieve. It's a very accessible racer offering that instant fast-paced, pick-up-and-play experience. Pretty basic stuff as far as the actual racing is concerned, but the wealth of ideas, such as the challenges and the special 'get into the zone' feature (where successful driving puts the player in a kind of dream-like state, improving both speed and handling), ensures that the action remains compelling throughout. On top of that, Bam! were also able to take criticisms of the game's first incarnation on PlayStation 2 into account when porting the game across to Gamecube, so you can expect *Driven* to be the most superior version to date. Looking good so far. NGC

Bam! were able to take criticisms of the PS2 incarnation into account, so expect this to be a superior version.



So far it's looking pretty smart, and the handling is much better than the poor PS2 version.



Look like Die Hard just lost the monopoly on realistic billowing fire.

We think that's one of the 'rail robots' up there, which enemies can use to spy on your progress.

TIMESP

trigger happy

In 1996, at around the time *Perfect Dark* was nearing completion, a small team of Rare staffers did the unthinkable – they left, and formed their own development house, dubbed Free Radical.

Two years on, and with the PS2's acclaimed *Timesplitters* under their belt, the trio of ship-jumpers – led by 'Dr' Dave Doak – are coding on a Nintendo platform once more. Be thankful. Because *Timesplitters 2* looks *in-bleedin'-credible*.

As you'd expect from the boys partly responsible for *GoldenEye*, *TS2* is a deathmatcher's dream. Four-player split-screen blasting is fast, bloody, laden with delicious weaponry, and customisable from the number of CPU-controlled bots right down to the intensity of the arena's lightbulbs. The maps are of Facility-rivalling greatness – and if you don't like them, you can *create your own* with the astonishing Map Builder.

This time, though, Free Radical are bunging in a deeper one-player mode – something neglected by the original's four-joypad focused play. You'll be rescuing lovelies from Notre Dame cathedral, chasing gangsters in a *PD*-esque future city, and – in a nod to *GoldenEye* itself – taking out CCTV cameras while stalking underground corridors. Cheeky.

The *Perfect Dark Zero* team best watch their backs. More on *Timesplitters* next month. **NGC**

INFO BURST

TIMESPLITTERS 2	
DEVELOPER:	Free Radical
PUBLISHER:	Eidos
HOW MANY PLAYERS:	1-4
RUMBLE FUNCTION:	Yes
ONLINE PLAY:	No
NUMBER OF DISCS:	1
GBA LINK-UP:	No

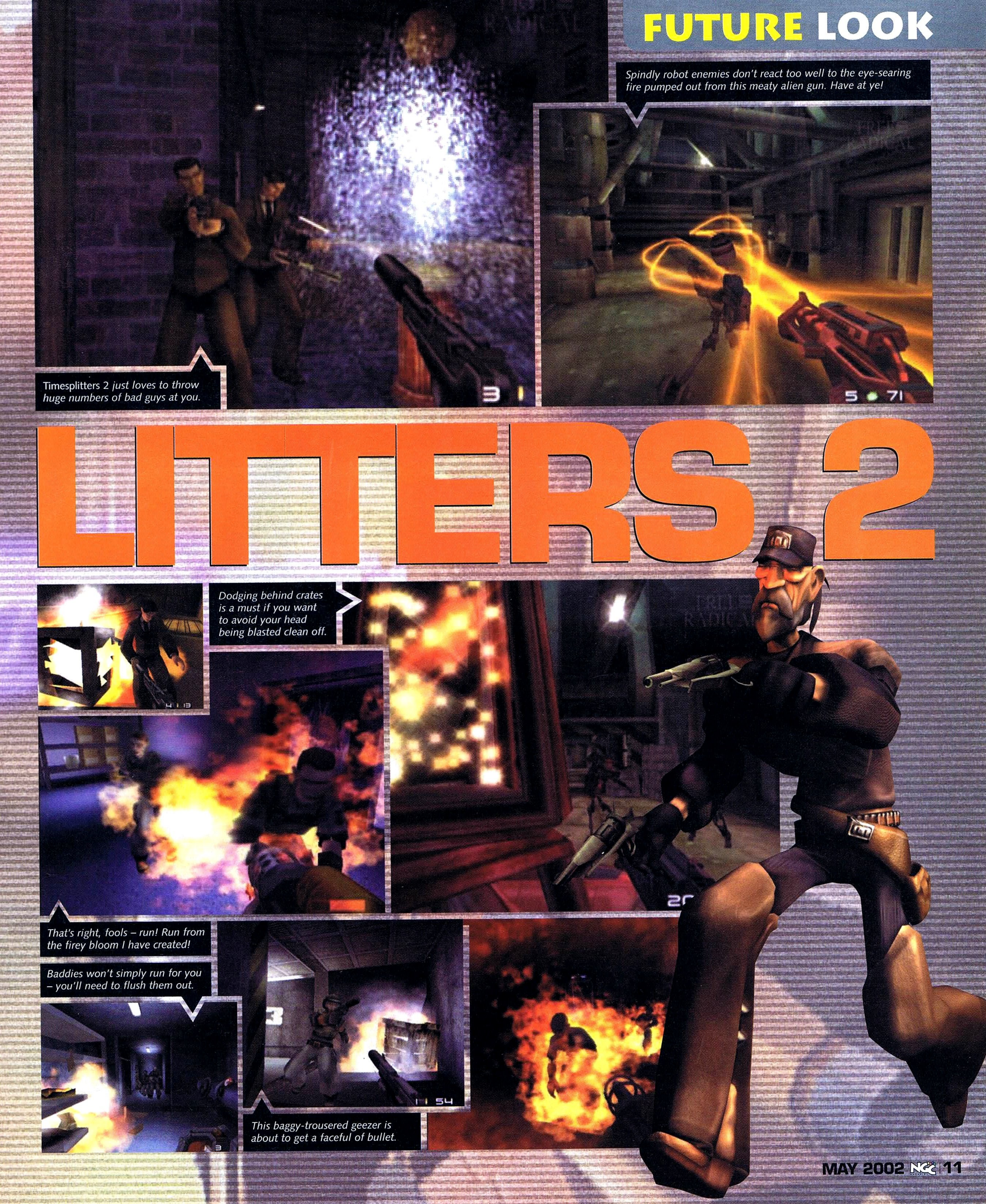
WHEN'S IT OUT?

US	UK	Japan
TBA	TBA	TBA

ANTICIPATION RATING

It's all very GoldenEye – and that's no accident.

Something odd and scary is happening here.



Spindly robot enemies don't react too well to the eye-searing fire pumped out from this meaty alien gun. Have at ye!

Timesplitters 2 just loves to throw huge numbers of bad guys at you.

Dodging behind crates is a must if you want to avoid your head being blasted clean off.

That's right, fools – run! Run from the firey bloom I have created!

Baddies won't simply run for you – you'll need to flush them out.

This baggy-trousered geezer is about to get a faceful of bullet.



FANTASY BECOMES REALITY



Squaresoft and Nintendo friends again; *Final Fantasy* GC and GBA-bound.

By Mark Green

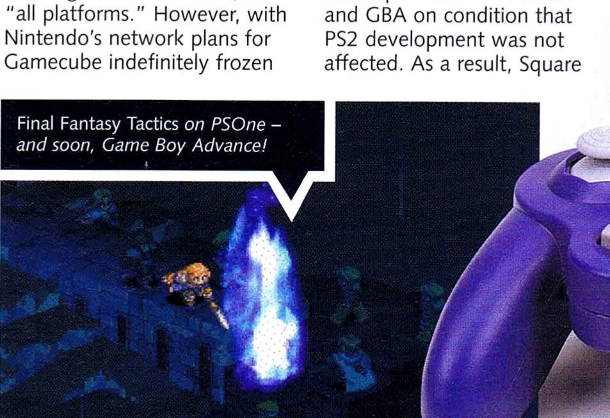
After six long years of chilly relations, one of the most important partnerships in videogame history has been rekindled. Nintendo have settled their differences with Squaresoft, clearing the way for the world's most popular RPG, *Final Fantasy*, to be released on Gamecube and GBA.

Square's relationship with Nintendo came to an end in 1996, when the *Final Fantasy* boys defected to Sony on account of Nintendo choosing limited-capacity cartridges as the medium for the N64. Their final game on a Nintendo system was the superb *Super Mario RPG*, launched in 1996 in Japan and the US but never released in Europe. Since 1999, though, rumours have been escalating that Square wanted The Big N's friendship back.

It's rumour no longer. A Nintendo spokesperson has revealed that three Nintendo-based *Final Fantasy* games will be on Japanese shelves by the end of the year. The first, *Final Fantasy Tactics*, is a GBA version of 1997's medieval strategy-based RPG. The other two games have yet to be revealed – but at least one will exploit the link cable to create "a new type of game" that will be playable on both GC and GBA. Rumours abound that it may be based on Japanese TV series Final Fantasy Unlimited.

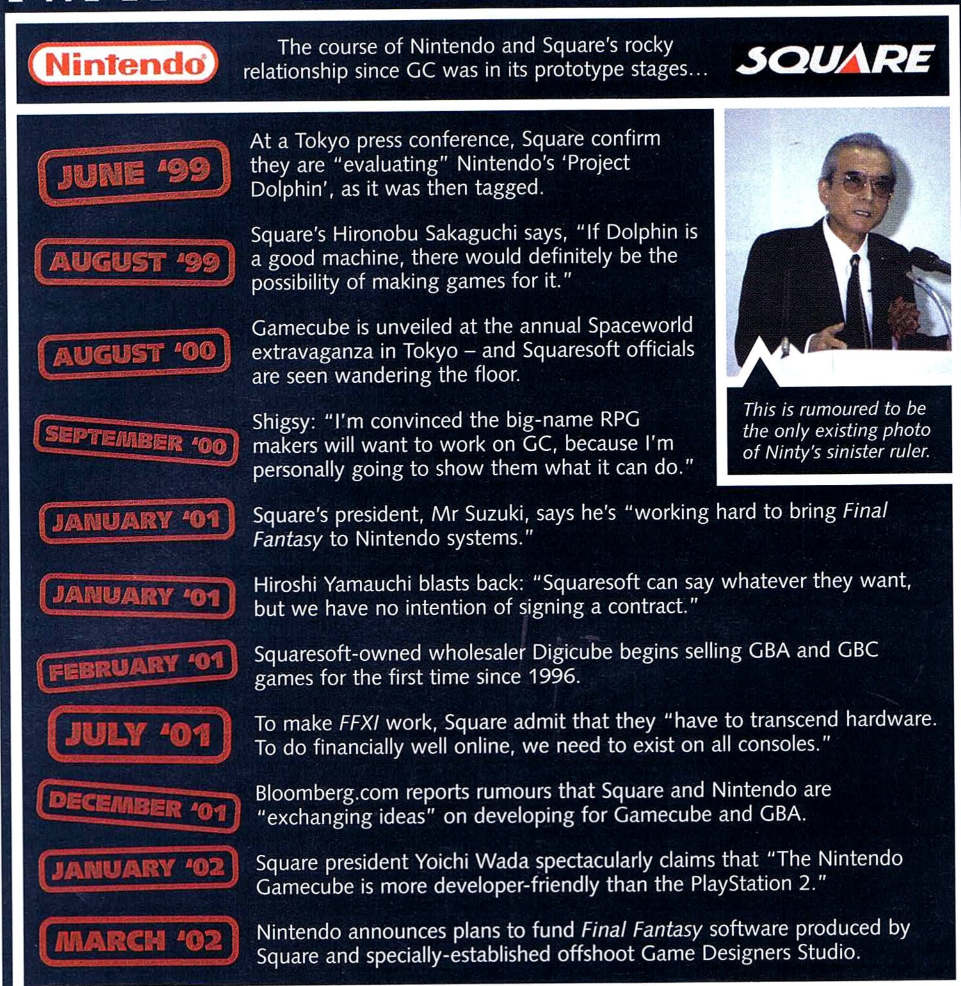
As we reported in NGC/61, Square have repeatedly reiterated their plans to bring *Final Fantasy XI*, the first online game in the series, to "all platforms." However, with Nintendo's network plans for Gamecube indefinitely frozen (see page 15), there's little likelihood of the eleventh *FF* landing on GC as part of this deal. *Final Fantasy XII* remains a PS2 only title.

The fixing-up of Nintendo and Square's relationship ends the *Final Fantasy* series' five-year exclusivity to PlayStation home consoles. Sony, who own 18.6 per cent of Squaresoft, agreed to allow development on Gamecube and GBA on condition that PS2 development was not affected. As a result, Square



Final Fantasy Tactics *on PSOne – and soon, Game Boy Advance!*

NINTENDO SQUARED


Nintendo — The course of Nintendo and Square's rocky relationship since GC was in its prototype stages... — SQUARE

JUNE '99	At a Tokyo press conference, Square confirm they are "evaluating" Nintendo's 'Project Dolphin', as it was then tagged.
AUGUST '99	Square's Hironobu Sakaguchi says, "If Dolphin is a good machine, there would definitely be the possibility of making games for it."
AUGUST '00	Gamecube is unveiled at the annual Spaceworld extravaganza in Tokyo – and Squaresoft officials are seen wandering the floor.
SEPTEMBER '00	Shigsy: "I'm convinced the big-name RPG makers will want to work on GC, because I'm personally going to show them what it can do."
JANUARY '01	Square's president, Mr Suzuki, says he's "working hard to bring *Final Fantasy* to Nintendo systems."
JANUARY '01	Hiroshi Yamauchi blasts back: "Squaresoft can say whatever they want, but we have no intention of signing a contract."
FEBRUARY '01	Squaresoft-owned wholesaler Digicube begins selling GBA and GBC games for the first time since 1996.
JULY '01	To make *FFXI* work, Square admit that they "have to transcend hardware. To do financially well online, we need to exist on all consoles."
DECEMBER '01	Bloomberg.com reports rumours that Square and Nintendo are "exchanging ideas" on developing for Gamecube and GBA.
JANUARY '02	Square president Yoichi Wada spectacularly claims that "The Nintendo Gamecube is more developer-friendly than the PlayStation 2."
MARCH '02	Nintendo announces plans to fund *Final Fantasy* software produced by Square and specially-established offshoot Game Designers Studio.

This is rumoured to be the only existing photo of Ninty's sinister ruler.

have formed a new subsidiary, Game Designers Studio, which is theoretically responsible for Nintendo development – when in fact a ten-man secondary production unit inside Squaresoft itself will handle all coding.

Game Designer Studios is supported by the Q Fund, a £100m development cash pot set up in January by Nintendo of Japan president Hiroshi Yamauchi – the man who's often been aggressively resistant to Square's tentative attempts to patch things up over the past few years. Yamauchi apparently softened when Akitoshi Kawazu, the man behind *FFI* and *II* who will head Game Designers Studio, raised the prospect of GC-GBA linked games.

"Around the end of last year," Nintendo told Japan's Famitsu magazine, "our discussion with Square began. Mr Kawazu held a vision of videogames that fitted with Yamauchi's. He commented, 'We want to challenge ourselves in developing a new *Final Fantasy* that links the Gamecube and GBA.' Yamauchi agreed – not only is Kawazu a talented game creator, but he also shared an enthusiasm for creating a new type of game."

Confusingly though, Square's Investor Relations Representative, Kazuyoshi Murakawa, seemed more reticent about the possibility of *Final Fantasy* on Gamecube.

Yamauchi softened when Square proposed GC-GBA linked *Final Fantasy* titles.

"The objective of the new company is to develop GBA titles," he said. "Gamecube titles are not a part of the plan. But because Game Boy Advance and Gamecube allow for link connectivity, we may make use of such a feature in the future."

According to Japan's Weekly Toyo Keizai business magazine, Square's decision to return to Nintendo was partly based on a need to increase revenue from games sales – the company has faced some sticky financial problems caused mainly by the failure of Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within, the animated movie that flopped last year. The cash-boosting strategy already seems to be working, as the share prices of both Nintendo and Square rose dramatically following the announcement.

Money wasn't the sole motivator, though. Many of Square's developers have reportedly been unhappy at being prohibited from working on Nintendo's consoles – especially the Game Boy Advance. *FF*'s only non-PlayStation appearance since 1996 has been on GBA's competitor, the minimally successful Bandai Wonderswan.

We'll have more comment – and hopefully first shots of *Final Fantasy Tactics* on GBA – in NGC/68. NGC

STOP PRESS

NEW WWF SHOTS!

Just as we were putting the magazine to bed, THQ knocked on our door and hand-delivered these *incredible* shots of *WWF Wrestlemania X8* on Gamecube. Forty WWF and ex-WCW wrestlers; a new game engine; create-a-wrestler mode; 40 match types – oh, mama! Enjoy these pics...

Here's a first – Booker T lying down on the job.

Look at the detail on these WWF crazies. Look at it!

A 'pointed' performance from Kurt Angle. Ahaha!



As with the US Cube Club – pictured here – proper DJs will be attending.



The bizarre US TV ads will soon be blazing across TV screens Europe-wide. Mint!

THE GREAT GAMECUBE MARKETING BLITZ

Nintendo crank the rusty handle of advertising...

Eight console launches down the line, and Nintendo are *finally* starting to understand marketing – in the sense that it's important to do a least *some* once in a while. Thankfully, this time around 'some' isn't enough for Nintendo. They've finally decided to haul that giant gold-stuffed war chest out of Yamauchi's attic and blow a whopping £62 million of it on cramming Gamecube down every European's throat.

By the look of their press release, Nintendo have all kinds of goodies lined up. Once you get past the lame 'Life's a game' signature ending and the usual guff about Gamecube being the only dedicated games console in the world, there's some aggressive advertising going on. First of all is the TV ad which, despite reeking of Third Place-ness, is certainly memorable, with some great in-game footage of GC's best titles. It should be running as you read this, so keep your eyes peeled when you're watching Brookie.

Next up comes the multitude of other media vehicles, ranging from lifestyle press, MTV, Yahoo and so forth – indicating that Nintendo aren't just targeting their core users, but actually making the effort to ensnare a much wider audience. On top of that, Nintendo are also employing some interesting sneak tactics, too, in the form of 'ambient activity'. This involves SMS text messaging, emailing and so-called 'street marketing'. We're not quite sure what the last bit means – let's hope it's not along the lines of Microsoft's pavement-painting in Australia, which earned them a hefty fine.

Last but not least will be a strong in-store presence, that will include 3,500 demo booths, video-footage supported by 'high-impact point of sale material' (read: enormous cardboard stands). Nintendo will also be bringing the Cube Clubs on a mammoth 42-date tour of Europe, taking in 28 cities. Each date will boast 50 playable Gamecubes, interactive attractions, DJs and much more. Check right for tour dates.

So if you were worried that Nintendo still haven't found the plot, you can feel safe in the knowledge that the N64's marketing-free legacy is finally behind us. Hurrah! **GE**

CUBE CLUB DATES

See www.cubeclub.co.uk for further info...

15th, 16th April
Infinity, Peter St, Manchester, M2

23rd, 24th April
Code, Heath Mill Lane, Birmingham, B9

26th, 27th April
The Boilerhouse, Old Truman Brewery, Brick Lane, London, E1

Newcastle and Glasgow dates will have been and gone by the time your read this.

WIN! We've got 10 pairs of tickets each for the Birmingham and London Cube Clubs on the 23rd, 24th and 27th. Email ngc@futurenet.co.uk using 'CUBE CLUB' as the subject line for your chance to win. Be quick – we'll choose and notify winners on the 19th April.

CAPCOM KEEP 'EM COMING

There was some fantastic news for fighting fans this month when Capcom's utterly fantastic 2D fighter *Capcom vs SNK2* was announced in Japan. If you've not played either instalment, then expect one of the most comprehensive beat-'em-ups ever, mixing characters and fighting styles from both outfits' finest brawlers. Rumour has it that Capcom are developing a specialised fighting pad to go with it too – our money is on a GC version of ASCII's awesome six-button pad that appeared on Dreamcast.

Next up from Capcom was a surprise announcement concerning a game called *Glass Rose*. As of yet we have no idea what it will involve, but we do know it will be revealed in full come E3 this May, with a scheduled release for Autumn 2002.

Along with *Resi* and the secretive *CAS RA*, it would seem that Capcom are well and truly behind Nintendo this time around. Thank the Lord. **GE**



SHORT CUTS



THE LOBBSTER BAILS OUT

That's right, folks. Mr Kenneth Lobb has resigned from Nintendo and has gone to work for crash-masters Microsoft. Perhaps best-known for his role in *GoldenEye* (the rubbish Klobb gun was named after him), Lobb was involved in numerous projects, influencing games such as *Banjo Kazooie* among a host of other second party-developed titles. We would, under normal circumstances wish him well, but... defecting to the Xbox team? See ya, Kenneth. **GE**



YOU'VE BEEN JANGOED

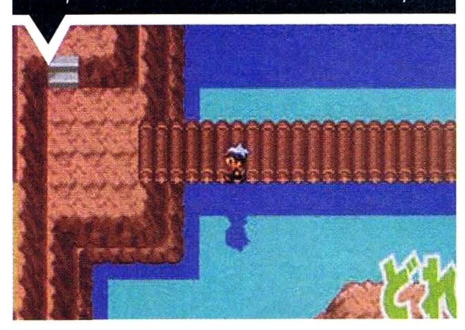
Weeks before Europe even gets its mitts on *Rogue Leader*, Lucasarts have announced a new Star Wars title for GC. *Star Wars: Bounty Hunter* is a third-person mix of adventuring and shooting that puts you in the shoes of Episode II character Jango Fett (Boba Fett's dad). Industrial Light & Magic, the godlike company responsible for the movie's special effects, will contribute the game's cut-scenes. **MG**

POKÉMON ADVANCE REVEALED

100 brand-new monsters for the GBA's first creature-battler!



So this is the next generation of visuals, is it? Compare with Camelot's *Golden Sun* and weep.



Nintendo recently took the lid off a handful of shots of their forthcoming GBA *Pokémon* game, and it's safe to say they all look a little underwhelming.

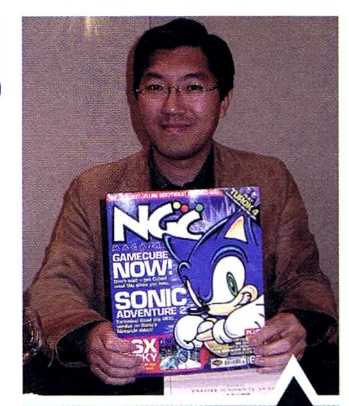
As far as the game itself is concerned, expect pretty much more of the usual. The top-down perspective remains the same, as does the usual process of visiting towns and wandering through the countryside to battle your monsters. For *Pokémon Advance*, 100 extra monsters have been conceived to add to an already healthy roster of 251.

As far as graphical enhancements are concerned, they're few and far between. There's some shadowing to increase the sense of depth, and reflections have been added to puddles of water as you pass through them, but so far, we've yet to see anything that moves very far beyond what was already available on Game Boy Color. Still, the battle sequences have yet to be demonstrated, so we'll reserve judgement until then. **GE**

NINTENDO OFFLINE?

In a recent interview, Yuji Naka of Sonic team revealed that his forthcoming *Phantasy Star Online V2* may never actually be playable online at all.

Nintendo's refusal to confirm their online plans, or at the very least release their online hardware, prompted Yuji to reveal that he may have to release *Phantasy Star* as a four-player split-screen game. Needless to say, this will greatly depreciate the experience of the game, as half the magic of *Phantasy Star Online* comes from the ability to form teams with total strangers and co-operate in the various game worlds. Whether or not Nintendo manage to pull themselves together and release the hardware in time remains to be seen, but the prospect of *Phantasy Star Offline v2* doesn't float our boat. **GE**



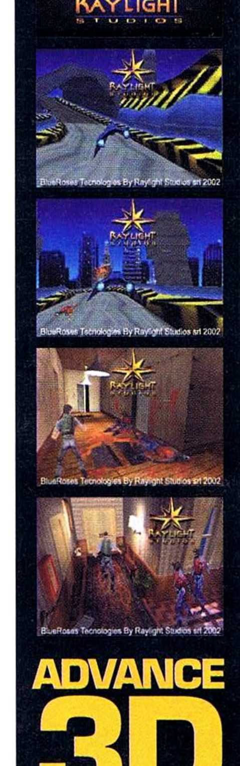
Let's hope he didn't open the mag and see the score we gave Sonic...



TUROK COMPO

Just a quick reminder that our monster *Turok* competition is still up and running. Hidden within these very pages is the third of the six magic jigsaw pieces, that, when complete, join together to form a miraculous whole that enables you to enter this amazing competition. So, find a large magnifying glass, and scour through the mag – once you've found the piece, stick it on your air ticket for the chance to fly to Austin, Texas to be the first in the world to play *Turok Evolution* on GC!

For a full list of rules, see issues 65 and 66 of **NGC**.



ADVANCE 3D

The GBA keeps going from strength to strength. This month, Raylight Studios revealed footage from their incredible new 3D engine. The survival-horror environments and *Wipeout*-style tracks are impressive, but we're sceptical about whether this engine will work so well outside the demo arena. Still, time will tell if the engine can support fully-realised 3D worlds with AI, camera mechanics and everything else on top. Until then, make your own minds up by visiting www.raylight.it/blueroses.htm. **GE**

Analysis of the issues that matter

NEWS PLUS



FILTHY LUCRE

In March, Nintendo predicted a Europe-wide Gamecube retail price of around 249 euros – around £150. So why are you paying £170 or more? NGC investigates.

It was the announcement that made 379 million Europeans instantly forget the months and years they'd spent waiting for Gamecube launch details. Nintendo's newborn purple son would be coming to shelves continent-wide at a magical 249 euros – which worked out at just over £150 by current exchange rates. Half the price of Xbox. £50 cheaper than PS2. It was a move of absolute genius.

And then things went bad. Amazon.co.uk suddenly switched their Gamecube price tag from £150 to £165, and told **NGC** that they would probably be "the cheapest in the country." Then trade magazine MCV reported that the big chain stores were furious with Nintendo for suggesting

BAG A GAMECUBE – CHEAP

As we went to press, high-street stores and websites were beginning to finalise their Gamecube prices and preorder deals. Here's a comparison…

Store					Notes
HMV	£169.99	£40	TBA	TBA	Pay £10 deposit in-store to preorder console and games.
Dixons	£169.99	£39.99	TBA	TBA	GC, game and extra pad for £235. £285 gets you another game and a memory card. £350, a third game and a second pad.
Argos	£169.99	TBA	TBA	TBA	Pay £10 deposit with catalogue number 981/0411. Not available via website or Home Shopping before July 2002.
amazon.co.uk	£170.10	£40.39	£15.59	£27.59	Price includes individual delivery charges. Gamecube price includes £3.25 surcharge if applicable. Pre-ordering is free.
Dixons Online	£173.24	TBA	TBA	TBA	Price includes £10 deposit and £3.25 delivery charge.

Nintendo's reasoning about price hasn't stopped the big stores stamping their feet and sulking.

such a low pricetag – because it would mean tiny profits for them. One major chain ominously warned that they "would absolutely consider not stocking the console" at such a price. At the time of writing, that figure of £150 has already become a long-forgotten dream – although reports persist that supermarket chain Asda is considering just such a pricetag.

To add to the confusion, Nintendo are stressing that they "do not set retail prices". Once Mr Store Manager has taken delivery of his big box of Gamecubes from Nintendo of Europe, he can decide for himself how much you have to pay, and how much profit he'll make. So what's going on?

Pick a number…

The trouble partly arises from that figure of 249 Euros, which Nintendo describe as an 'expected' European retail price. That approximate price seems to have been tailored to countries that adopted the Euro as their main currency back in January – travel to Germany or France on 3rd May with 250 euros in your pocket and you'll likely pick up a standalone Gamecube no problem, with the shop manager making a tidy profit. But simply converting that €250 into £150 – which is exactly what everyone in the UK did when they heard the news – doesn't necessarily work. After all, the $30 pricetag on a pair of Levis in the US doesn't translate as £21 in the UK…

…any number

A Nintendo source told NGC that they never intended the press and public to calculate the UK price by performing a basic currency conversion. "Once the trade press make that kind of assumption," a Nintendo source told us, "It travels right across the industry, and then everyone's expecting a £150 Gamecube."

But that reasoning hasn't stopped the big stores stamping their feet and sulking. "Because Nintendo of Europe is run from the European mainland," a senior source at a major chain told NGC anonymously, "every decision seems based around every country except the UK. We pay VAT, high taxes, distribution costs, and two-and-a-half times what other countries shell out for rent and so on. €249 just isn't workable. To be honest, I don't think Nintendo care about the UK market. They've upset a lot of people here."

Link in the chain stores

But if it's 'unworkable', how is it that some independent retailers are coping with a £150 pricetag? There's an unpleasant whiff of greed emanating from the major chain stores. Like Nintendo themselves, they're expecting to make the majority of their profit on the Gamecube's *games*, rather than the console itself. Can't they just give us Gamecube at £150 and live with the relatively small profit? It's still a profit, after all.

According to a source at an independent retailer, who asked not to be named, it's all part of the endless drive for higher profits. "If you were a big, big retailer with shareholders to please," the source told NGC, "You'd have to make money on everything. Every square metre of shop space has to be used efficiently – if a shelf full of Xbox or PS2 games earns you substantially more profit than the same shelf stacked with Gamecubes, then why bother?"

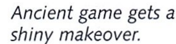
Clive Bishop, CEO of the National Association of Specialist Computer Retailers, believes that, despite Nintendo's insistence that "the big stores can't hold us to ransom," something's *got* to give.

"The major chains have got the industry by the balls," he fumes. "If big retailers say something is priced too low, and they're not going to stock it, companies have to sit up and take notice. Smaller stores will be sitting tight, watching the big retailers flex their muscles and shout and scream until a final price is settled on."

In fact, as we went to press, the Nintendo vs Retailer wars were already quietening – by the time you read this, Gamecube's pricetag will have settled somewhere around the £170 mark, giving the big stores the shareholder-pleasing profits they so desperately crave. And most punters will be forced to shell out for a bundle – including at least one game and an extra joypad – that clocks in at £200 or more, ensuring that shop managers go home with suitably bulging wallets.

Let's face it, though: even 200 quid is *still* a world-quaking launch price for a new console. And if everyone makes a beeline for their local Asda or independent retailer, maybe the tantrum-throwing bosses of rival game outlets will be forced to reassess their pricing policies… NGC

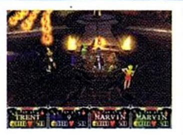

P20 SPY HUNTER


Ancient game gets a shiny makeover.




P21 GAUNTLET DARK LEGACY


Slightly less ancient game gets a shiny makeover.




P22 RESI EVIL BIOHAZARD


Oldish game gets a shiny… (etc.)



ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

FACT BLITZ

1 At least 15 golfers to choose from, including Mario, Luigi, Peach, Donkey Kong, Yoshi, Daisy and Wario.

2 About 100 holes, some 'straight', others lawnmowered to resemble Nintendo's most famous mascots.

3 Dive into tournaments, playing against GC-controlled golfers or up to four human counterparts.

4 'Power Shots', a la the N64 version – godlike timing can send a ball soaring miles into the distance.

KILLER Q

? Yawn! What's the point? Golf games are about as excitement-filled as an episode of Countdown.

Not this one. Every stroke is nerve-wrackingly unique, thanks to the wind, surface conditions, and a control system that borrows from traditional golf games – tap the button in time with an on-screen 'swing-o-meter' – but simplifies it so *everyone* can pull off a birdie. Or, in the case of experienced *Golf*ers, mess up a perfectly simple swing.

RUMOURS

- The N64's *Golf* swapped data with a GBC version via the Transfer Pak – we'd bet there'll be similar goings-on with the inevitable *Mario Golf GBA*.
- New characters are a given – we reckon Professor Gadd from *Luigi's Mansion* will be taking to the green this time around…

ANTICIPATION RATING






WHEN'S IT OUT?





US	UK	Japan
TBA	TBA	TBA



A shot from the intro, no doubt – but these are game-quality graphics you're gawping at. Mama mia, indeed.

The reverse angle. Never have Donkey Kong's ample buttocks been so detailed.



MARIO GOLF

The king of the swingers returns.

This is why, despite everything, despite all the pain and hurt and heartache, we still love Nintendo. From out of nowhere (or rather, from out of the pages of Japan's Famitsu magazine) come first shots and details of not one, but *two* Mario games we had *no* idea were coming.

Like the N64's own superb *Mario Golf* (90 per cent in NGC/34), this stunning new version is being developed by Camelot (the *Golden Sun* boys). The play mechanics are borrowed from their ages-old *Everybody's Golf* on PlayStation – simple, accessible controls and a stubborn refusal to take the sport seriously mean *Mario Golf* on Gamecube will hook even those folk who'd rather swallow a bag of golf balls than watch BBC2's coverage of the US Masters.

Nintendo's involvement means Mario, Luigi, and Peach donning the checked trousers, courses decorated with Piranha Plants and spotted mushrooms, and a disc almost exploding with bonus minigames, hidden characters and other irresistable extras. All this, and *Mario Tennis*, too! Ah, it's good to be alive…

Everything from the shine on Mario's cap to the pattern mowed into the grass is belief-beggaringly detailed.

MARIO TENNIS

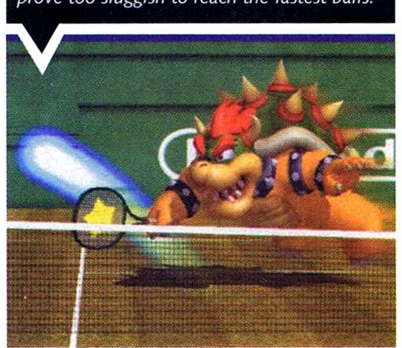
Camelot serve up another ace...

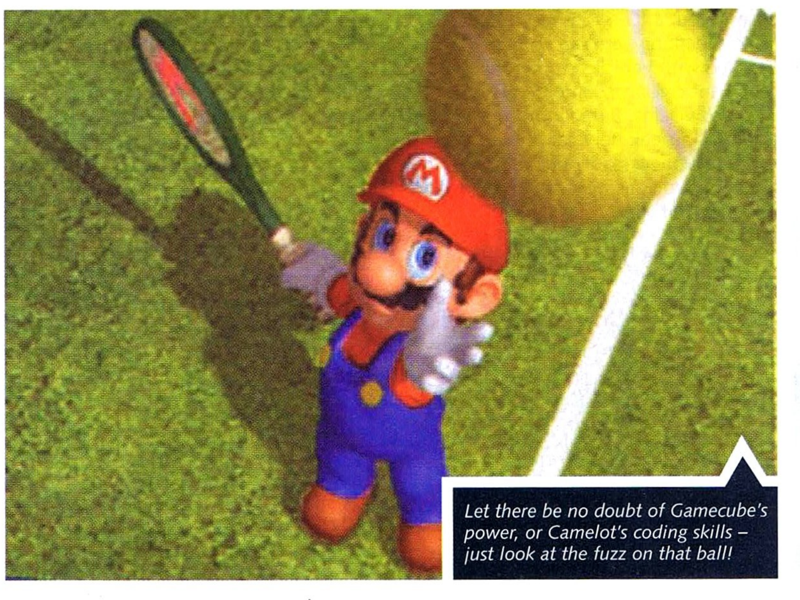
Now there's a pleasant surprise. *Mario Tennis* may have quietly snuck up on us when we weren't looking this month, but the news that there's a Gamecube sequel to one of the N64's most enjoyable multiplayer games in the pipeline is still very welcome.

Judging from these new screens, you can expect pretty much the same kind of stuff as before (it *is* tennis after all), only this time the Gamecube's extra power has been put to great use, most notably through its multiple texture-layering capabilities. As you can see for yourself, Camelot have really gone to town on the surfaces of the in-game objects and environments. The fur on the tennis balls and the grass on the courts is impressive enough, but it's the subtlety of the skins of the character models themselves that *really* impresses us. We thought the characters in *Super Smash Bros Melee* were stunning enough, but these more recent renditions look even more solid, detailed and accomplished – just check out the smoothness of Bowser's features for starters.

As far as gameplay is concerned, don't expect much to have changed from the first game – not that that's a problem. The glowing trails from power shots remain, and we imagine the simple, yet surprisingly in-depth control scheme will also remain intact. More next month...

Characters of Bowser proportions often prove too sluggish to reach the fastest balls.





Let there be no doubt of Gamecube's power, or Camelot's coding skills – just look at the fuzz on that ball!

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

FACT BLITZ

1. Take part in insane minigames that bend the rules of tennis in some weird and wonderful ways.
2. Simple controls hide a devilishly complex play mechanism, allowing you to pull off a huge range of shots.
3. Play with up to three others, for one of the most addictive multiplayer experiences money can buy.
4. Loads more individual animations for each player, such as winning cheers and losing sulks.

NEW!



Just like in *Super Smash Bros Melee,* expect plenty of single and multiplayer options to tinker with, as well as a shedload of hidden modes and characters to unlock.

RUMOURS

- **The GC version, just like its N64 predecessor, will have a link-up mode to go with it. Rumour has it that a GBA game is already in the works...**
- **Expect to see plenty of brand-new characters, with a far wider range of special powers, attributes and playing styles.**

KILLER Q

? The GBC game had an ace RPG style mode in it – can we expect the same from this one?

The RPG mode may make a comeback in some form – whether it will appear on the GC version has yet to be seen. It's rumoured that a GBA version is already in the pipe, so we expect the RPG elements to crop up in that, with stats being transferable to the GC version via link cable. We've yet to get our mitts on an early copy of *Mario Tennis*, though – until we do, we'll assume anything's possible.

ANTICIPATION RATING



WHEN'S IT OUT?


TBA


TBA

TBA

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

FACT BLITZ

1 Prevent the Nostra Corporation's sinister, and slightly flawed, plans to shut down the world's energy supply.

2 Classic weapons – machine gun, oil slick, smoke screen – plus new EMP bombs, flamethrowers and rail-guns.

3 Leap from broken bridges to transform into a speedboat or waterbike, just like in the original.

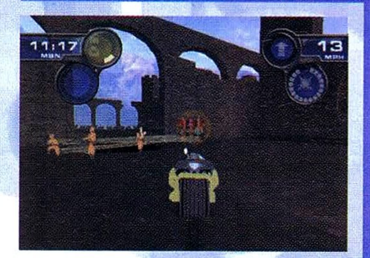
4 New remixes of 'Theme from Peter Gunn' from the original – including two from rock combo Saliva. Seriously.

KILLER Q

? Do the friendly vans make a comeback? And can you still blow them up?

Yep, the weapons van – which popped up from time to time in the original and allowed you to drive into it on ramps, Knight Rider-style – returns. Hoving into view mid-level, it repairs any damage and refills ammo. And then you can blow it to bits. Ha!

NEW!



Back in the 1980s, at least *Spy Hunter*'s civilians had the decency to stay in their vehicles. This time, you'll find idiots like these simply wandering the streets, just *begging* to be squashed flat. Or, even better, hastily separated out into their constituent parts by a heat-seeking ground-to-ground missile. Splat!

RUMOURS

- **The PS2 *Spy Hunter* DVD included a video clip about the making of the game, plus the video of 'Your Disease' by – get this – popular beat combo Saliva. Seriously. Both are likely to be on the GC disc, too.**
- **We're expecting a couple of Gamecube-exclusive tracks to join the PS2's original – and rather sparse – collection of 14.**

ANTICIPATION RATING



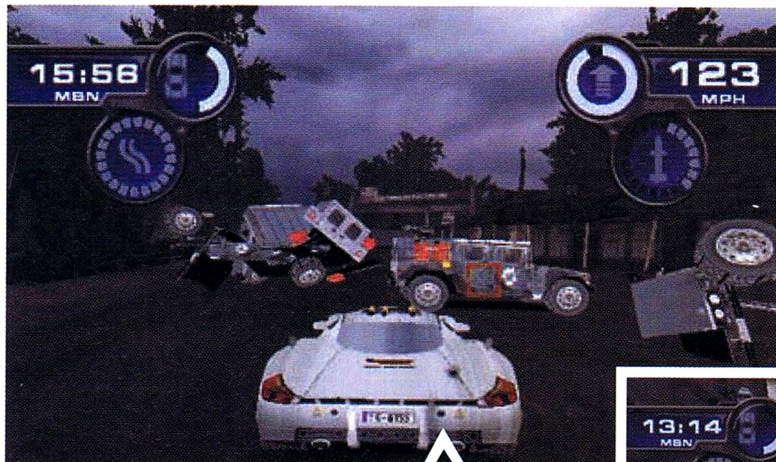


WHEN'S IT OUT?

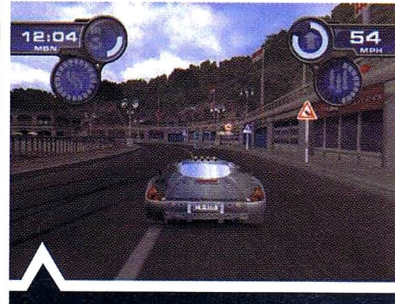

TBA


TBA


TBA



Scenes reminiscent of Burnout, as you struggle to avoid piling headlong into the carnage up ahead.



Visually, it's fairly basic – but the breath-snatching speed of Spy Hunter is key.



SPY HUNTER

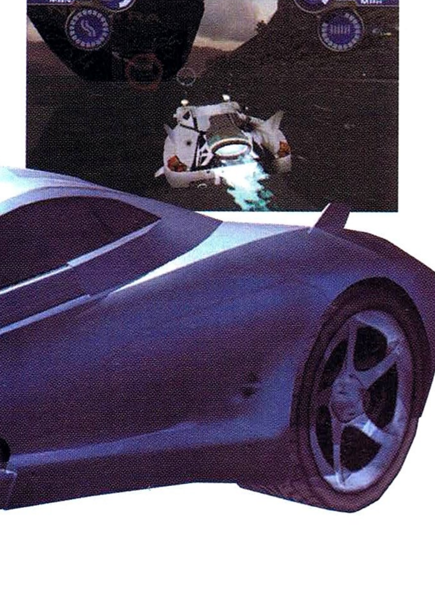
Midway restore their rickety old motor.

Take the team that coded po-faced simulator *F1 World Grand Prix*, hand them an all-action arcade racer from a time when the third dimension hadn't been discovered yet – and, surprisingly, you end up with a speed-drenched Gamecube ride that gives even *Ridge Racer* a right proper run for its readies.

Midway's 1984 *Spy Hunter* was about you, a 'G-6155' motor laden with weaponry, and an endless road packed with vehicles, some driven by innocent civilians, some by black-hearted villains. Paradigm's new version features a sleek new car and a handful of new, unnecessarily destructive weapons such as heat-seeking cluster missiles. But the basic formula – drive fast, dodge the innocent, destroy the evil – is unchanged. Even the original's infamous Mad Chopper returns: a helicopter piloted by someone you've clearly upset, given his obsession with dropping bombs on your bonnet.

Spy Hunter veterans will be pleased to see the return of the car's ability to morph into a speedboat mid-circuit – this time executed with Matrix-style slo-mo camerawork – while newcomers will appreciate the varied missions that break up the standard civilian-dodging, car-smashing action. Escort colleagues' vehicles; plant tracking devices on enemy trucks; chase down your own stolen car – there's tons to do.

Midway will be dropping *Spy Hunter* in our laps not long after Gamecube's UK launch. Review soon.





Find and collect potions to pull off glowsome magic like this.

Alright, it looks rubbish. Plays like a dream, tho'.

Let the ghost-pummelling commence!

GAUNTLET DARK LEGACY

Fits Gamecube like a glove.

Or *Gauntlet Legends: Part Two*. This follow-up to the N64's hack-and-slasher – itself an update of Atari's seminal 1980s D&D *Gauntlet* – seems happy to smarten its visuals up a tad, and... er, that's it, pretty much.

But then again, that might be all that's needed. *Gauntlet Legends* was a perfectly enjoyable slice of medieval sword-'n'-sorcery – and by sticking to the same formula, *Gauntlet Dark Legacy* looks set to give you and three of your bestest buddies something decent to do with your fingers while you wait for *Super Smash Bros Melee* to dock at UK shores.

The idea – which lovers of 1984's original will recognise instantly – is insultingly simple: walk forward, stab A to chop up hordes of advancing beasts, walk forward, stab A, and so on. There's the odd key to find, the occasional chest to fight over, but *Dark Legacy* is mostly concerned with little more than smacking endless armies of unloveable monsters into next week.

With friends, *Dark Legacy* comes alive, as the four of you master the individual traits of Warrior, Elf, Valkyrie and Wizard to break through the ever-advancing ranks of baddies. And, best of all, *Gauntlet*'s famous commentary ("Wizard is about to die!") is as belly-tremblingly bass-heavy as ever. Good stuff, and out 3rd May.



ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

FACT BLITZ

1 Eight character classes – Warrior, Dwarf, Valkyrie, Knight, Archer, Jester, Wizard and Sorceress.

2 Eleven huge worlds, including the ominous Forsaken Province, and the not-quite-so-ominous Gnarled Branches.

3 The terrifying return of Death, who *leaps at you from chests then chases you through the level forever*. Brrrr.

NEW!

As ***Dark Legacy*** makes no secret of being Dungeons & Dragons The Game, it's no surprise to see character stats being bumped up as they progress. But a neat extra touch is the appearance of a 'familiar' once your character reaches a certain level: a little fella who hovers over your shoulder, shooting as you do, and effectively doubling your firepower.

RUMOURS

- Midway being such big fans of Nintendo's cubular console, don't give up hope of a GC-exclusive level popping at at the end of *Dark Legacy*.
- We're not sure what Nintendo will make of the secret characters, which include 'S&M dwarf' and a 'schoolgirl' – scantily-clad, no doubt.

KILLER Q

? So *Gauntlet: Legacy* ends up being a bit tedious and repetitive in single-player, does it?

Hammering at A for hours isn't fun, but get three of your mates round to help out during tense battles, and you'll have a blast.

ANTICIPATION RATING





WHEN'S IT OUT?





Now | 3rd May | TBA

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

FACT BLITZ

1 Take control of Chris Redfield and Jill Valentine, and flush Raccoon City's sinister mansion clear of zombies.

2 Beautiful backgrounds, incorporating FMV and real-time lighting for lifelike scenery movement.

3 Make a bloody mess of your foes with knives, pistols, shotguns, and – get this – *man-sized rocket launchers*.

4 Based on the PSOne *Resi 1*, but packed with 1,001 improvements, changes and secrets exclusive to GC.

KILLER Q

? Can't wait – but is it worth me importing the Japanese version of *Resi Evil: Biohazard?*

Hard to say. Although the menu screens and spoken text are in English, the stuff that matters – item descriptions and hints – is all Japanese. The US version will be days from release by the time you read this, so hang on for that, we would.

NEW!



Bzzzz! Capcom have been regularly updating their website (www.capcom.co.jp/bio) with shots of new monsters, and these pesky bees are the latest baddies. With six-inch-long stings and a tendency to attack anything that moves, these aren't your regular picnic-botherers. Although you can crush them underfoot with a satisfying squelch.

RUMOURS

- *Biohazard* creator Shinji Mikami has confirmed that we'll be 'treated' to those pace-slowing door-opening animations once again – but – praise be – they can be skipped by a simple tap of A. Yay!
- At least ten alternative endings – most revolving around Albert Wesker – will be tucked onto the game's two discs.

ANTICIPATION RATING



WHEN'S IT OUT?


June


Autumn


TBA



Oh. My. God. Something tells us this fella ain't at all friendly.

Camera angles are designed for maximum spookiness. Mummy!

Albert Wesker here proves integral to Resi Evil: Biohazard's myriad plot twists.

RESIDENT EVIL BIOHAZARD

You fright up my life...

Are the hairs on the back of your neck standing up? Is your spine alive with cold electricity? That's because something very, very scary is making its substantial presence felt. Capcom's terrifying *Resident Evil: Biohazard* is finally here.

Or it's putting the frighteners up Japanese gamers at least. UK Gamecubers have a while to wait before it creeps onto these shores.

But in the meantime, get a load of these skin-crawling new screens, which reveal some of the ickier mutants heroes Chris and Jill will be bumping into. Don't worry about *Biohazard* being little more than a graphically tartier version of the six-year-old PSOne original. Japan's respected Famitsu magazine believes there are enough new features and ideas in here to make this so-called 'update' a unique *Resident Evil* instalment in its own right. And such encouraging sentiments are backed up by their score – a practically unheard of 39 out of 40, Famitsu's most generous GC award yet. A copy should be dropping through the NGC letterbox any day now. Full review *very* soon.



A statue of a three-headed dog? Enough to make us wet our pants.



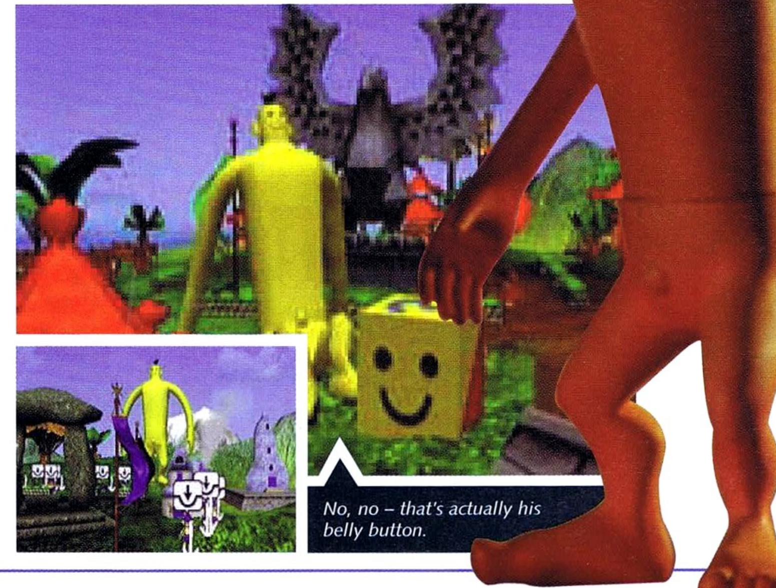
DOSHIN THE GIANT

Black & White and red all over (possibly).

On the 64DD it stank – but thanks to the skills of Brit coder Giles Goddard, *Doshin* is finally starting to look like a smart little game.

The basics of the game are really simple. You're a whopping great big giant who has the ability to manipulate your surrounding environment. You can rip up trees, create villages and even raise the land – the better you are at this, the more followers you get and consequently the more monuments you get in your honour. You can – if the mood takes you – pick up villagers and lob them into the sea or smash up their tiny houses in a crazed rampage, but as you'd suspect, you're not going to make many friends that way.

Doshin the Giant remains a very intriguing concept, and we have yet to get to grips with its subtle intricacies. Until that time, check out this bundle of new shots...



No, no – that's actually his belly button.

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

FACT BLITZ

1 You grow bigger by doing good deeds, or shrink by being a nasty beggar to the island's inhabitants.

2 Raise the land, play around in the sea and grow trees in an attempt to please the villagers.

3 Battle disasters in an attempt to protect your cherished monuments and fragile villagers.

4 Pedestrian gameplay, where you have all the time in the world to relax and tinker with the island.

NEW!

Throw enough villagers into the sea, stomp on enough townspeople, destroy enough buildings, scenery, and anything else you can find – generally misbehave, in short, and Doshin turns the colour of Beelzebub – red. That's red with a capital Evil.

ANTICIPATION RATING



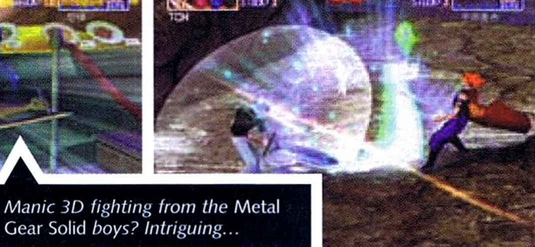


WHEN'S IT OUT?






TBA | TBA | Now

Manic 3D fighting from the Metal Gear Solid boys? Intriguing...



RAVE: THE GROOVE ADVENTURE

Roughing it up, old-skool stylee.

Based on Hiro Mashima's serialised comic in Japan's Shonen Magazine, *Rave: The Groove Adventure* is looking more and more like Konami's take on Sega's *Power Stone* the more we get to see of it.

Not that that's exactly a bad thing, mind you.

Taking the form of a four-player scrap-fest, the game allows you to select from eight different characters, each with their own weapon and/or special attacks. In single-player – or 'Story' mode – you'll have to fight your way through a number of arenas in order to advance the plot of your chosen character. In multiplayer mode, up to four players can go head-to-head, or team up with the soul purpose of smacking the living daylights out of each other. As you'd expect, power-ups can be collected to help boost your strength and unleash devastating 'Groove Attacks' (read: Special Moves) on your unsuspecting opponents. Which is, well, groovy.

Needless to say this is looking great, with some tasty anime artwork and some smart animation on the main characters, but whether or not it can topple *SSBM* as the multiplayer brawler of choice is another thing altogether...

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

FACT BLITZ

1 Fully interactive arenas littered with shedloads of power-ups and weapons to pick up.

2 Different stories for each character, based on the popular Japanese manga.

3 Planned GBA version for up to four players with rumoured GC link-cable compatibility.

KILLER Q

? The cartoon is brilliant – is the game going to be along the same lines?

From what we've seen, yes. Haru and Ellie are in the game, among others. The story also revolves around the dark and light stones of the series.

ANTICIPATION RATING






WHEN'S IT OUT?





March | TBA | Feb



SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

SPIDER-MAN THE MOVIE

You are Peter Parker in Treyarch's new websling-'em-up…

INFO BURST	
SPIDER-MAN THE MOVIE	
DEVELOPER:	Treyarch
PUBLISHER:	Activision
HOW MANY PLAYERS:	1-4
RUMBLE FUNCTION:	Yes
ONLINE PLAY:	No
NUMBER OF DISCS:	1
GBA LINK-UP:	No

WHEN'S IT OUT?

US: Now | UK: 20th June | Japan: TBA

ANTICIPATION RATING

It was 40 years ago that Spider-Man made his debut in Marvel's Amazing Fantasy comic, issue 15. "The world will soon marvel at the awesome might of Spider-Man!" yelled the web-swinging one from the cover – and he was right, too.

Four decades of comic books, TV cartoons, lunchboxes and duvet covers later, Peter Parker's radioactively-enabled alter-ego is web-swinging onto the big screen – and, more importantly, Gamecube. There's plenty that's new for the Spidey legend in the 21st Century: robotic web-spitting spiders, the death of Parker's Uncle Ben, Willem Dafoe's 'unique' interpretation of the Green Goblin. But the stuff that makes Spider-Man great – the web-slinging, the wall-climbing, the wisecracks – hasn't been neglected.

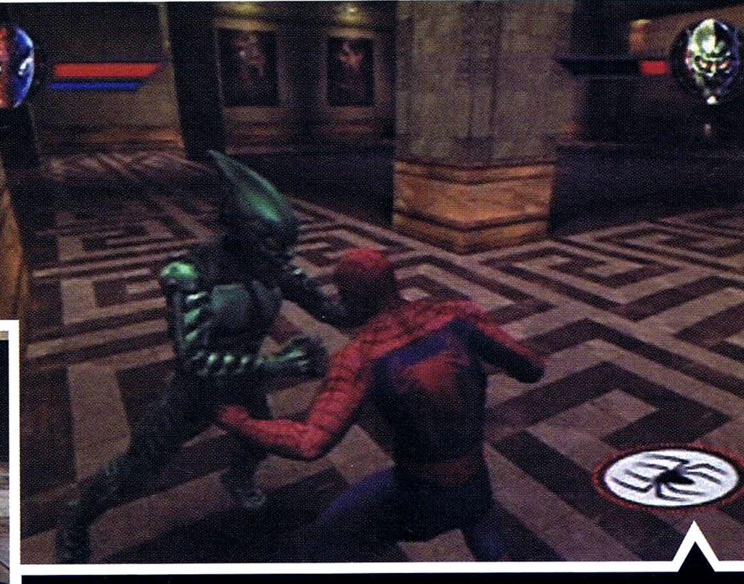
So can coders Treyarch – following in the footsteps of *Tony Hawk's* boys Neversoft, who fashioned a superb *Spider-Man* game a year or two ago – do everyone's favourite superhero-cum-college nerd justice? A whole wide world of web is waiting just over the page…

DOES WHATEVER A SPIDER CAN

Although, admittedly, we haven't seen many spiders wearing jeans and punching bank robbers in the face...



KICK! *Hammering at B, A and Y invokes Spider-Man's impressive kick-punching combos – perfect for flattening those goons. And you collect new moves as you progress through the game. Bingo!*



SPIN! *Your multi-functional web-spurting wrist can wrap those baddies up nice and tight, or fling them over your shoulder, or create a protective dome of spider sputum that explodes, taking out anyone foolish enough to loiter nearby.*

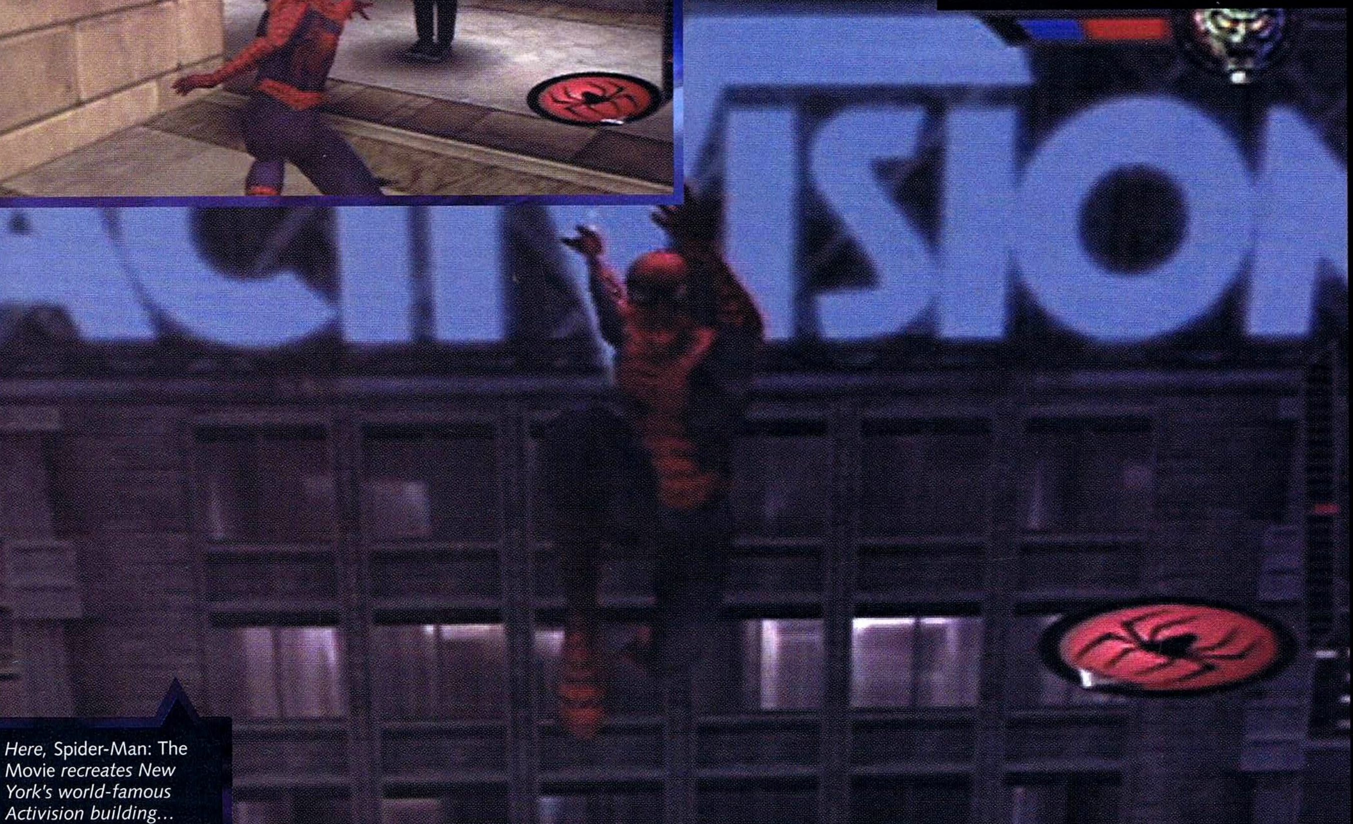
WRESTLE! *Actually, there isn't any wrestling. In fact, try to stare out the Green Goblin here and he'll squash this spider flat. Your best bet is grabbing a nearby barrel, with B, and chucking it at his face.*



Don't just stand there, Mr Friendly Guard – punch him in the chops!



The old 'find switch to turn off electric barrier' problem. Nice to have you back.



Here, Spider-Man: The Movie recreates New York's world-famous Activision building...







LAST-ACTION HERO

Remember Spider-Man on the N64? Probably not, because it was only released in the US. A fine 3D platformer with the odd control niggle, it – how can we put this? – partly inspired this Gamecube version. Neversoft's first, and only, Spidey title, it was awarded a solid 78 per cent by Alan Maddrell (remember him?) back in NGC/51.

HOW TO BE A SUPERHERO

Grab your latex suit (try not to make it too tight around the crotch, eh?), and let's be super!

ALLIE-OOPS *This handy meter reveals that the bank's guard has taken a monumental beating. Find him and protect him – or it's mission over.*

SPACE ODYSSEY *Spider-Man's levels are usually fairly claustrophobic – but spacious areas such as this bank give Mr Parker room to stretch his legs and swing about all over the shop.*

LOCK ON *Using the C-stick, the camera is fixed on enemies, Zelda-style – so you can chuck web in mid-swing and guarantee hitting your target.*

FREEDOM *Impressive-looking city, no? And it doesn't slow down a jot, even when six of the Green Goblin's hoverships are chasing you around the sky.*

BREAKDANCE! *No, no, no – not The Caterpillar, but the final flourish of one of Spidey's meatier combos. You can check your moves list with the pause menu.*

WHO'S THE BOSS? *The Vulture here doesn't actually appear in the movie – but in the game you'll be facing a speedy pursuit of the ageing cockney supervillain.*

It's the movie that could rival even Star Wars: Episode II for box office domination this May. Crammed with web-slinging, Spidey Sense-tingling, Green Goblin-bashing moments, Spider-Man: The Movie represents the coming to life of every comic book junkie's most vivid dreams.

Well, almost. Because most Spider-Man fans probably dream of *being* the tights-wearing hero rather than watching Hollywood nerd Tobey Maguire wisecracking his way through two hours of heart-stopping action. And that's precisely where Activision and California-based codeshop Treyarch step in. In *Spider-Man*, *you* are Peter Parker – and you can climb walls and ceilings, spit sticky spider-juice from your wrists, web-sling around the skies of New York City, and feel the joypad jiggle in your hands as that thief-foiling Spider Sense tingles away.

You begin as humble reporter and part-time wrestler Peter Parker, dressed in jeans and t-shirt and using your fledgling web-slinging abilities to chase your Uncle Ben's murderers around New York. As things progress and Peter dons *that* red-and-black catsuit, your crime-fighting takes you into the midst of bank raids, to the top of fire-ravaged towers, through the sewers and subways of NY, to an apocalyptic battle with The Shocker – one of three spectacular end-of-level bosses.

The digital Spidey's roster of moves and abilities gives him the *feel* of a superhero.

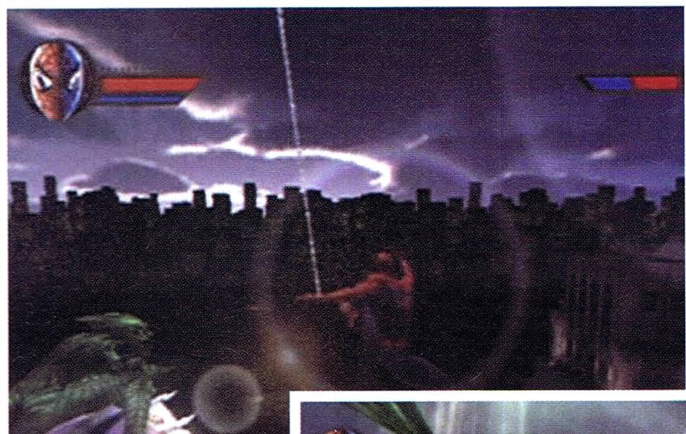
The digital Spidey's bulging roster of moves and abilities gives him the *feel* of a superhero. Straight kicks and punches can be strung together to create walloping double-legged piston kicks and face-ruining roundhouse punches, giving fights with the game's endless goons a proper movie-like feel. But it's the superpowers gifted by that radioactive spider that *really* get us tingling: sticky web can be used to lasso and hoist enemies into the air, form an explosive dome over our

That's the Spidey we know and love. And that's one of the camera angles that we hate with an absolute vehemence.

LOOK – UP IN THE SKY!

Much of *Spider-Man: The Movie* takes place at more-or-less cloud level. We love it, we do!

1 *Camera lock is essential if you're looking to spit your silly string at these unpleasant floating assistants of the Green Goblin. And just take a look at all that traffic down there! Madness.*



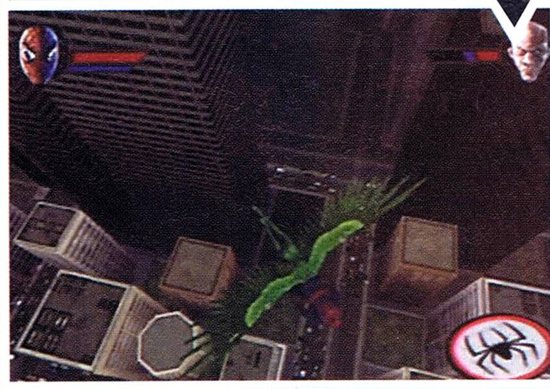


2 *Later, the grinning dwarf himself roars by on his floating spaceship thing, making for much finger-twiddling as you swing and dodge and shoot.*

3 *After you've climbed to the top of The Vulture's tower, he'll lead you on a merry chase around the sky, chucking bolts of pain at you as he goes.*



4 *Bring The Vulture to an undignified end by wrapping your legs around his walnut-like head. At 600m above ground, this just can't be safe...*



hero, create makeshift boxing gloves for extra punching power, and, of course, capture thieves just like flies.

Climbing surfaces both horizontal and vertical is great fun – *Spider-Man* intelligently fades out walls and flips the camera to aid your gravity-thwarting gadabout. But using the stringy stuff to soar over the streets of Manhattan is by far the game's finest moment. The city stretches *miles* into the distance – and twizzle the camera with the C-stick and you'll feel your stomach flip over at the sight of moving traffic on the streets hundreds of metres below. Swing low enough and Spidey – voiced by Maguire himself – will even have jokey shouted conversations with awed pedestrians.

That's a big part of *Spider-Man*'s appeal: everything, from the sarky sense of humour to the rubbery texture of Spidey's suit, does both the original comic and the stunning-looking movie ample justice. Moments such as the Spidey Sense alert – where the camera suddenly darts and snakes its way through corridors to reveal a civilian in danger – and Parker's wisecracks ("Good looks and sparkling wit!" he says of a goon. "Oh, wait – that's me.") make this as compulsive as setting a spider on fire with a magnifying glass.



Want more? We'll have a full review in NGC/68. See you there! NGC

THE VERDICT

NGC MAGAZINE

After extensively playtesting the unfinished *Spider-Man: The Movie*, we have to admit – it's got its problems. The camera is *atrocious* – one minute spinning like a top, the next stubbornly refusing to budge – and sucks much of the enjoyment from climbing on ceilings and swinging around New York. There's the odd shining moment amid the clumsily-animated visuals (such as rushing to rescue guards in the bank level) but otherwise *Spider-Man* relies heavily on you scampering about and punching goons in the face. Still, there's plenty of time for Activision to iron out such 'issues'. We'll score the finished version next month.

Fireball power is active – give this goon a taste of the flames pronto.

Spider-Man meets Mission: Impossible, by the looks of it.

This bozo – who's dressed like a French pirate for little apparent reason – is about to get a big surprise…

Interesting moves there, Mr Parker. And is that a Quaver the bad guy's just thrown?

Web-swinging should be huge fun on GBA – no meddlesome camera angles to worry about, see.

IT'S ABOUT TIME

See that clock in the corner of the screen? It's a race against time in every one of Spider-Man Advance's levels – giving the game a much pacier feel than the leisurely Gamecube version. Bosses refuse to be seen off at speed, too, so the closing moments of each stage are lip-tremblingly tense.

SPIDER-MAN ADVANCE

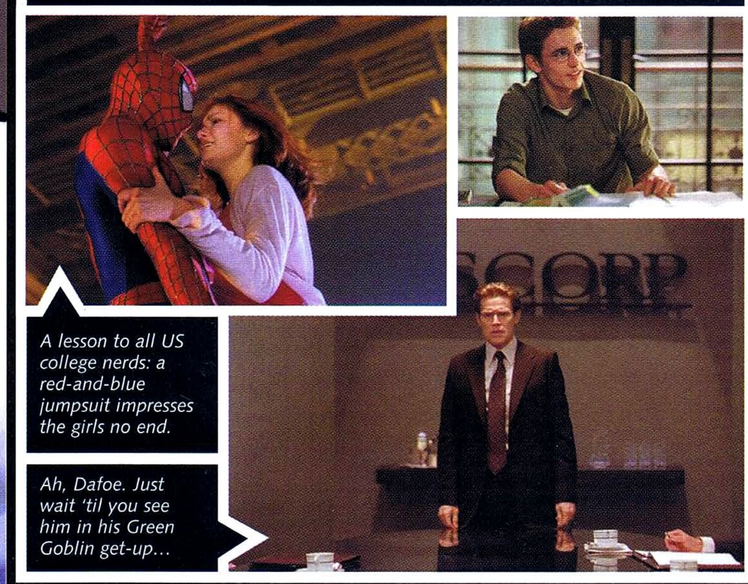
The game of the movie goes insect-sized…

First ever shots of *Spider-Man* on GBA? Believe it. Activision's pocket version looks spectacular – web-swinging in 2D looks like it's working a treat, and the bite-sized Spidey is able to choose from new abilities like bomb-chucking and fireball-throwing. The battle with the Green Goblin over the skyscrapers of NY is also present, as is the chance to creep up on goons by crawling up, under and over bits of scenery. Keep it schtum, but we reckon *Spider-Man GBA* will be better than its GC daddy…



MOVIE MOMENTS

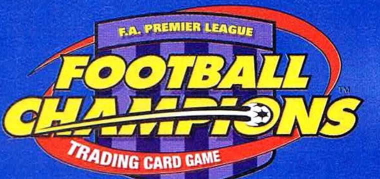
Some shots of the movie that inspired *Spider-Man The*, er, *Movie*…



A lesson to all US college nerds: a red-and-blue jumpsuit impresses the girls no end.

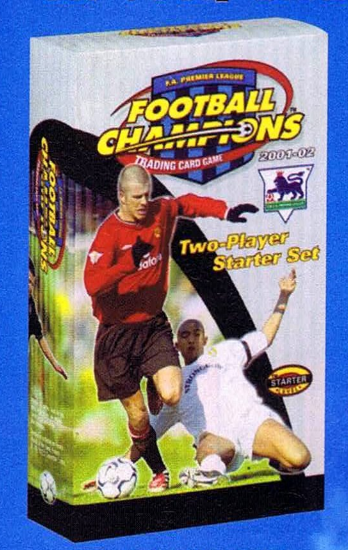
Ah, Dafoe. Just wait 'til you see him in his Green Goblin get-up…

ALL THE STARS, ALL THE TEAMS, ALL THE EXCITEMENT



THE ULTIMATE TRADING CARD GAME

WHO'S GOING TO BE ON YOUR SIDE?



STARTER PACK

You're the manager - now it's time to test your skill with the ultimate footie game. Starter packs contain everything you need to play - then start to build the perfect team using boosters packs. It's the ultimate football strategy game. Available at Newsagents everywhere.



BOOSTER PACK



BUILD YOUR OWN TEAM

ALL THE TOP PLAYERS

OFFICIAL F.A. PREMIER LEAGUE PRODUCT



Football Championship Hotline: 08457 125599.

So far so good. ISS is looking real peachy, with some gorgeous stadiums and classy player models.

Little sequences like these are ten a penny in football games these days, and ISS is no exception, utilising loads of intermission animations.

SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

ISS WORLD SOCCER 2002

Football's finest returns to Gamecube.

Unlike in FIFA, character skins are very nicely done.

So far we've had the 'privilege' of playing two footie games on Gamecube. The unexciting *FIFA 2002* which, while an improvement on the usual rubbish, is still far from great, and Sega's *Virtua Striker 3* – which we reviewed last issue, and which is so utterly wretched that Tim irreversibly fused it to *Universal Studios* with the use of a blowtorch.

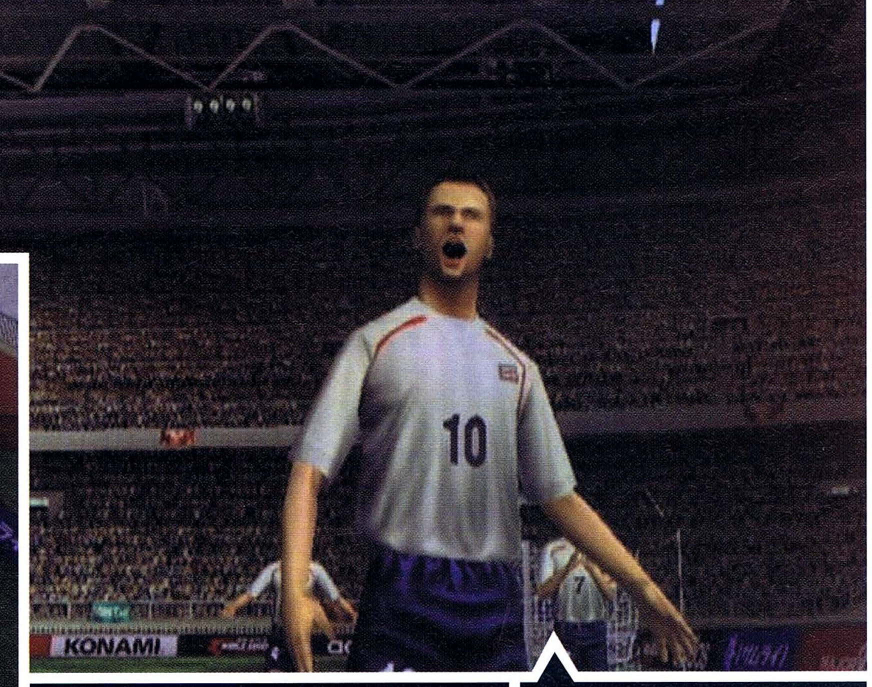
So the competition for *ISS 2002* is pretty much non-existent, and considering that Konami have never let us down in the past, it would be safe to assume that their first Gamecube footie sim will be the pick of the bunch. Thankfully, we were able to find out for ourselves when Konami delivered an early copy of *ISS 2*. Here's the result…

Just as you'd expect, nasty two-footed tackles from behind warrant strict punishment – if the ref saw you, that is...

SINGLED OUT

The statistics of the players vary wildly. Konami have made sure that the world's finest players all have their distinctive attributes in place, which means you need to be constantly conscious of who you're passing the ball to and what they're capable of once they're in possession. What this means is that players such as Owen are far more likely to make the most of probing long balls and delicately threaded passes through the opposition defence. On the other hand, Beckham needs to be sought out for him to deliver the perfect cross or take advantage of set-pieces.





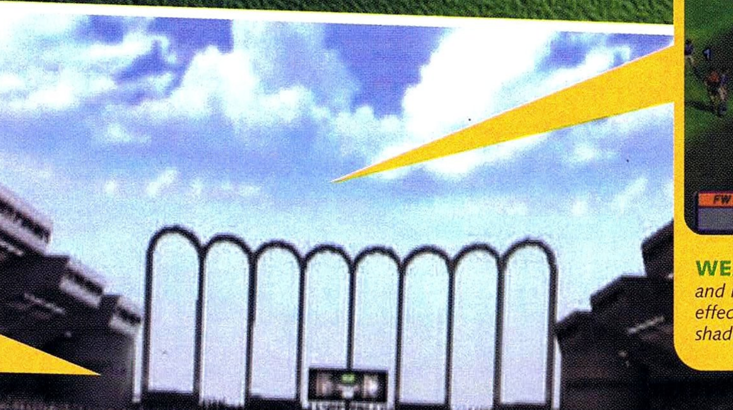
Here, Owen takes the penalty. Knowing the strengths and weaknesses of individuals in your team will help you get the better over your opponents in the long run.

Some of the players in the game will have their proper names – others will need to be tinkered with in the editor.

ISS IN-GAME ANALYSIS



STADIUMS *All constructed on a suitably grand scale – giving that all-important sense of space – while the crowds in the stands don't jitter and jerk like deranged day-release patients with a caffeine addiction.*





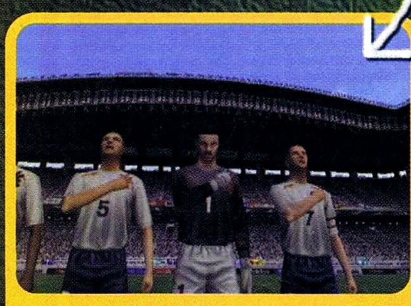
WEATHER EFFECTS *Expect the usual sun, rain and night-time scenarios, and all the pitch-altering effects they bring with them, such as proper real-time shadows and speedy grass surfaces.*



PLAYERS *Well-animated, with a wide range of expressions ranging from elation to disgust. Virtua Striker 3 still reigns supreme in this area. Shame it's so rubbish in every other…*



SET-PIECES *A height and power meter are all you'll have when it comes to putting the ball where you want it. Still, at least you don't give the game away with a giant neon arrow arcing into the enemy's six-yard box.*



PLAYER NAMES *Members of FIFA all have correct names – the rest have dubious monickers such as Brian Briggs. But you can sort that out via the game's extensive editor.*



PASSING *As smart as you'd expect from an ISS game. It does most of the work for you – just point your guy in the right direction and apply the requisite amount of power.*



CROSSING *Leg it to the by-line by tapping X and you'll float the ball delicately into the area. An important skill in ISS, it's good for making openings.*



So far, so good. Unfortunately, Konami are still some way off completing *ISS 2* (as it'll be known over here) and the only playable build was missing many of the final version's modes. Still, we finally got the chance to see how the in-game mechanics compare to *ISS*'s previous incarnations, and it's fair to say it's holding up very well.





In terms of gameplay and depth it sits somewhere between *ISS Millennium* on the N64 and *Pro Evolution* on PS2. For some reason Konami figured that Gamecube players wouldn't be interested in the depth of play offered in *Pro Evolution* so they've opted for simpler, arcade-style controls.

Back to basics

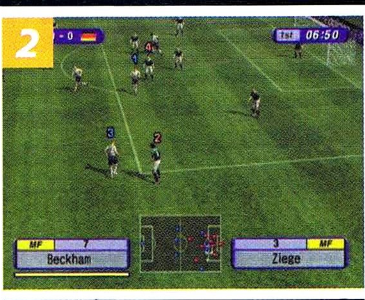
It seems very much like Konami have built this from the ground up, and in some respect, it feels like the intention is to take on *FIFA*. The reason we say this is because at this stage *ISS 2* feels very much like EA's title, in that it there doesn't seem to be very much to the experience. Just as *FIFA*'s 'depths' can be figured out within the first five minutes of play, *ISS 2002* seemed to be prone to the same problem. But like we said, this is still some way off completion. Many of the tricks and passing variants (such as the cheeky one-two) still weren't in place, making play seem a little clumsy at times – but that's as far as our complaints go.

Despite these shortcomings, *ISS 2002* proved to be excellent fun – enough for us to feel pangs of dismay

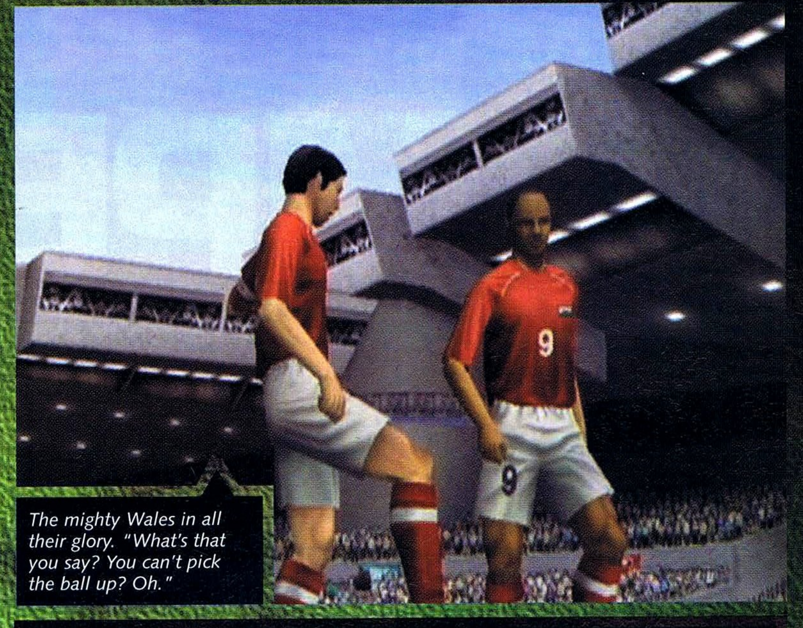
ANY WAY YOU LIKE IT



Unlike in International Soccer Superstars Millennium, there are no cheesy role-playing modes at all. In fact, the different modes that will be added to the final game are disappointingly uninspired. There are the usual friendly matches, international cup competitions, a custom league and world league.



As per usual, there's also an editor that you can use to make minor adjustments and generally tinker with the game's finer points – and, of course, that all-important four-player mode. You'll also have the ability to speed up or slow down the pace of your games, which is handy, as the default setting is very sluggish.



The mighty Wales in all their glory. "What's that you say? You can't pick the ball up? Oh."



The sense of scale in ISS is certainly comforting, unlike the claustraphobic Virtua Striker 3.

England vs Belgium. At least you don't have to listen to them sing their woefully out-of-tune anthems.

ISS's swift passing, fluid action, and depth of play make it the best footie game ever.



when Konami came to take it away at the end of the day. Visually, it's looking very nice indeed. The stadiums are well designed, the crowd animations aren't too stilted, and the movement of the players is very fluid. Moreover, the facial skins in *ISS 2002* actually go

The facial skins actually go some way to doing their real-life counterparts some justice.

some way to doing their real-life counterparts some justice, which is more than can be said for the freakish sour-faced chimps from EA's latest effort. On top of this, there's some great commentary to accompany the action from the likes of Jon Champion and Mark Lawrence – far beyond the repetitive crud of rival footie sims.

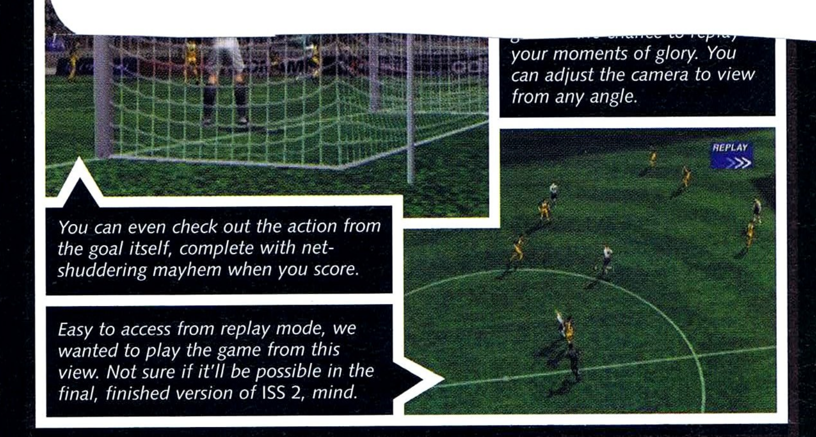
Extra time

It's impossible to judge *ISS* at this stage, but we can say that the version we played showed great potential, and will doubtless be the Gamecube's best football game come May. By that time, Konami will have completed the extra modes, refined the mechanics, and included all the trickery and silky-smooth plays that have continued to make the *ISS* series the world's finest rendition of the beautiful game. Until the final judgement, console yourselves with this batch of freshly snapped screens. More on *ISS* next month. NGC

BE-RECORD NOT FADE AWAY

So what's the point of belting the ball into the back of the net if you can't savour the accompanying, traditional joy of rubbing your mate's nose in your glorious victory, over and over and over again? Once again, your stunning footwork can be replayed at your leisure from just about every conceivable angle. Our favourite has to be the net-cam, which rattles around insanely as the ball blasts home.





your moments of glory. You can adjust the camera to view from any angle.

You can even check out the action from the goal itself, complete with net-shuddering mayhem when you score.

Easy to access from replay mode, we wanted to play the game from this view. Not sure if it'll be possible in the final, finished version of ISS 2, mind.

It's the great NGC tat pile giveaway!

COMPETITION

WIN! A MASSIVE MOUNTAIN OF GAMING GOODIES!

We've moved! And in the process of hauling all our stuff from the old office to another one about 50 metres down the road, we uncovered a whole heap of stuff that we'd either lost, forgotten about, or (in the case of the *Superman 64* cart) deliberately stashed away somewhere we hoped would remain untouched by human hand for generations to come.

So, having dug up a haul of vintage treasures that would have Tony Robinson's Time Team turning green with envy, what are we going to do? We're *giving the whole lot away to you*, our loyal readers, that's what. Yes… this is your chance to own… (rummages through pile)… a sheaf of **N64** Magazine compliment slips! Or… (more rummaging)… a copy of the superb *Bugs Bunny In… Crazy Castles 4* on Game Boy Color! Without a box or instruction manual!

Of course, 90 per cent of the merchandise nestling in that ginormous pile isn't quite as hopeless as that. There's a copy of just about every Star Game-rated N64 cart, a genuinely decent steering wheel from ASCII, a funny Mario-on-a-spring toy circa 1992… all kinds of great stuff. Best of all, this Everest-dwarfing pile of Nintendo merchandise is being allocated on a one-prize-per-winner basis – so with approximately, ooh, 225 individual bits and bobs on offer, you've got 225 chances to win. Magnificent, eh!

All entries must be in by 23rd April 2002 – and the **NGC** cleaners are threatening to chuck the whole pile in a skip any minute now, so you'd better get your skates on!



N64 MAGAZINE HEADED NOTEPAPER
which Mark found mixed up his pile of S Club 7 photos!

THE LAW

1. The closing date for entries is Tuesday 23rd April 2002.
2. The competition is open to all UK residents except employees of The Future Network plc.
3. All entries must be sent to: Tat's The Way I Like It, **NGC**, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW, by the closing date above. Proof of posting is not proof of delivery, alright?
4. There is no cash alternative to the competition prize.
5. The Editor's decision on all matters affecting this competition is final, legally binding, and incredibly loud.
6. No correspondence will be entered into.
7. Well, well, well – crawling back to the Zapper like a bird on its belly.

BOUNCING MARIO *found behind Geraint's ear! A special timing mechanism makes him jump when you least expect it!*

ASCII STEERING WHEEL *as found nestled beneath box after box of antique air rifles under Jud's desk!*

A SNES *Oh yes! A fully working console! (or at least it will be if you can find some games for it).*

NGC MAGAZINE WINNERS!

MOVIES, GAMES AND, ER, VIDEOGAMES (NGC/61)

Mature readers may remember the year 2001, and the competition we set you to design some kind of Nintendo-related movie material (poster, storyboard, script, etc). We've finally picked a winner, so it's a firm handshake to **Jon Price** from **Exeter**, who wins a shiny Panasonic Q from the generous folks at Acclaim – the lucky fella. Honourable mentions and a Gamecube game also go to:

- **David Exton**'s lovingly-crafted and dead funny *Kuru Kuru Kururin* treatment. Ace!
- **Becca Chandler** and **Rachel Hendry** for their beautiful *Zelda* movie poster.
- **John Kendall**'s *Tetris* – starring Geoff Capes – which had everyone in stitches.

GAMECUBE HERE PLEASE! (NGC/62)

The question – how many soccer games are due on Gamecube this year? – was so stupidly ambiguous, we ended up accepting any answer from zero to five. And the first entry out of the big **NGC** hat was: **Joseph Taylor** from **Taunton**. Top work, fella: UK Gamecube and a heap of games on its way to *you*.



KIRBY 64 (NTSC VERSION) *As discovered in Wil Overton's long-forgotten 'secret box', mercilessly cracked open by us!*

TWINE *Why wait for 007: Agent Under Fire or Pheonix Rising when we uncovered this, buried in Paul's hair?*

NGC MAGAZINE ARENA

HOW NGC SCORES A GAME

NGC has one of the toughest scoring systems around. We won't award our Star Game accolade until we're sure you're getting your money's worth.

85 and above — Only after playing a game to the end will we consider awarding it our Star Game seal.

84–70 — If we award a game more than 70 you can be certain it's fantastic, if flawed, fun.

69–50 — Every so often a game comes along that's perfectly playable, but just not special in any way.

49–20 — Here you'll find games that were lazily programmed or hurriedly cobbled together – or simply bad ideas.

19–0 — The disaster zone. There have been a couple and we've not shied away from giving them a firm kicking.







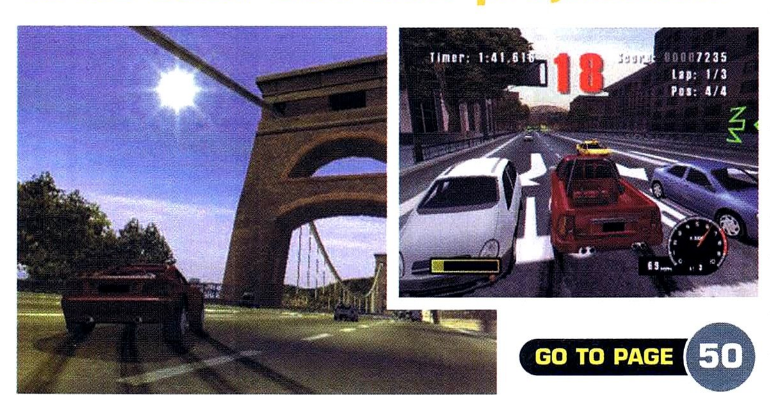
LUIGI'S MANSION

Hoover up the dead in the Gamecube's first-ever suck-'em up! Woo!

GO TO PAGE 38

BURNOUT

Pedal! To! The! Metal! Time to drive with extreme prejudice...



GO TO PAGE 50





SONIC ADVENTURE 2 BATTLE

The crazy blue rodent migrates to GC...

GO TO PAGE 46

TEAM GC

Eight people Fourteen launch games. One Gamecube. Relentless violence ensues…

IF YOU'RE IN A HURRY

We've tried to provide the most comprehensive reviews around, but if you're in a real hurry, or just can't be bothered to read the full review, you can always just use our Verdict box!



PLUSSES AND MINUSES
These tell you the good and bad bits about the game, breaking them down into easy-to-spot pluses and minuses.

IF YOU LIKE THIS…
There are hundreds and hundreds of games out there – some of which will be similar to the one we're reviewing. This bit helps you seek out another title of the same type. 'If you liked *GoldenEye*, you might also like *Turok 2* or *Quake*'. See?

VISUALS What does the game do with Gamecube's blistering graphical power?

SOUNDS How good are the game's sound effects and music?

MASTERY How well does the game make use of the Gamecube and its incredible hardware?

LIFESPAN Will the game last you for months or a matter of hours?

VERDICT An overall opinion of just how good the game actually is. Plus, of course, a score.

PLUSSES & MINUSES



+
- Cool stuff

–
- Not so cool stuff

IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Pokémon Stadium
NGC/41, 90%
Actually, don't bother if you've got the new one…



9 VISUALS



7 MASTERY



8 SOUNDS



6 LIFESPAN



VERDICT

JEREMY BICKMAN
Weaver's attempts to buff Jes' head like a Super Monkey Ball met with some resentment. "Only Mr Sheen shines umpteen things clean, mother funster!" he screamed.

PAUL EDWARDS
Believing him to be a caped vigilante after playing *Batman* for too long, Paul started peeling off Kittsy's "superhero mask". Unfortunately, he wasn't wearing his skin suit that day…

TIM WEAVER
Tim's plan? To eat every launch game before anyone else notices. But how are you going to play them now? "Well, it's simple. I just put on this rubber glove and insert… BLEURRGHH!"

MARK GREEN
What are you doing with that bit of wood, Greener? "Well, in my new capacity as Nintendo Head of Secret Police, my first duty is to neutralise any potentially hostile elements to the party. Er, I mean company. Hey, life's a game man!"

JUD WEBB
A firearms collection larger than the Iraqi army's didn't help Jud's attempts to half-inch the office Gamecube. "Strapped, I'm unstoppable!" he yelled, shortly before a shard of broken glass entered his cranium.

DAN GEARY
Oi, Geary! There's no need to take it out on Jud, you violent drunkard. "What? Oh – Jud said he was relaunching, so I decided to help out with this champagne bottle. You know – like with the ships!" Er…

GERAINT EVANS
Not even special 'Welsh driving' skills could save Geraint from a terrible demise when an introductory-level zombie bit through his neck on the first level of *Biohazard*. Idiot.

BUFFALO KITTS
Kittsy was glad he came to work today. "Normally I have to pay two dwarves in leather Jango Fett costumes and a sailor for this kind of treatment," he said. Er, alright then.

EXTREME G3

Crazy space bikes! Improbable tracks! In the future! This way…





GO TO PAGE 54

SUPER MONKEY BALL

Marble Madness with apes trapped in spheres!



GO TO PAGE 56

WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM

It's the hoistest with the moistest! Is that right? *(<Slap> – Ed)*

GO TO PAGE 60







ESPN WINTER SPORTS 2002

Can Konami improve on the rubbish *Nagano Winter Olympics*? Can they heck.

GO TO PAGE 64







TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

The world's oldest wearer of Quiksilver clothing goes for a nice skate in the park.

GO TO PAGE 66





CRAZY TAXI

Fancy a painstakingly accurate simulation of minicab driving? No? Didn't think so…

GO TO PAGE 70



TARZAN FREERIDE

The jungle VIP goes log surfing! Just like in the Edgar Rice Burroughs novel.

GO TO PAGE 72



BATMAN: VENGEANCE

Holy polygon count! The Caped Crusader cracks goon skulls for the commissioner.

GO TO PAGE 74



NHL HITZ

It's ice hockey with extra attitude! And ice hockey sure needs more of that…

GO TO PAGE 75





DAVE MIRRA 2 FREESTYLE BMX

Massive levels! Crazy stunts! Subtle product placement! *Tony Hawk*'s on two wheels this… well, is!

GO TO PAGE 77





UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

Pick up rubbish! In a theme park! Forever! It must be illegal to have this much fun…



GO TO PAGE 79







SPOOKS *Some shimmer into view from nowhere, others haunt only their favourite room. All of them are susceptible to a good old-fashioned hoovering after you've shocked them with your torch beam.*

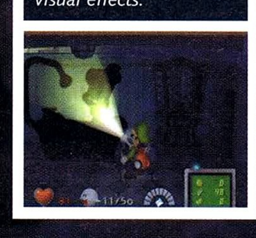
BACKPACK *Sucked-up spooks are stored here – and later, you can upgrade the hoover nozzle to spit out fire, ice and water and weaken more meddlesome spirits.*



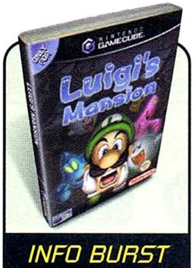
FURNITURE *Interactivity is the name of Nintendo's game: use your vacuum to rattle tables, stoke fires, open cupboards and suck up tablecloths. The reward? Treasures aplenty.*

GAME BOY HORROR *Usually displays all the moolah you've collected from treasure chests – but there's also a mansion map and camera tucked away inside this little beauty.*

TORCH *Each room is pitch-black until you exorcise the spirits within, hence the torch. Gives Gamecube a neat excuse to show off its roster of eye-bulging visual effects.*



CONTROLS *It's the analogue stick to make Luigi walk, and the C-stick to wiggle the torch and hoover around independently. Which makes for some interesting body contortion from our moustachioed friend.*



INFO BURST

LUIGI'S MANSION

DEVELOPER:	Nintendo
PUBLISHER:	Nintendo
PLAYERS:	1
MEM CARD PAGES:	3
RUMBLE FUNCTION:	Yes
GBA LINK-UP:	No
DISCS:	1
ONLINE PLAY:	No

WHEN'S IT OUT?

US	UK	Japan
Now	3rd May	Now

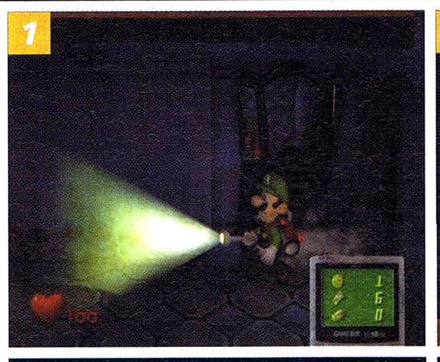
COST: £40

LUIGI'S MANSION

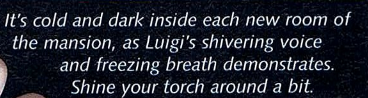
It'll be all fright on the night...

WHEEL OF MISFORTUNE

Luigi's Mansion is Nintendo's most linear 3D game to date – so linear, in fact, that a simple six-step process takes you all the way to the final boss.



1



It's cold and dark inside each new room of the mansion, as Luigi's shivering voice and freezing breath demonstrates. Shine your torch around a bit.

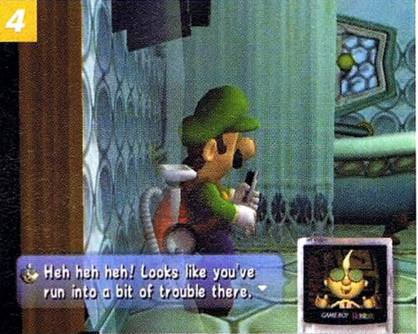


2

Lawks! G-g-ghosts! They'll chase after you and simply cackle at your panicked vacuuming – that is, until you throw your torchbeam on them and reveal their icy hearts.



Quickly switch to the hoover by pressing R and you're off. Pulling the analogue stick away from the struggling spook will have him stowed in your dustbag faster.



4

After a brief struggle, with a satisfying popping sound, the giggling ghoul is tucked away inside your backpack for safekeeping. Just like the Proton Packs from Ghostbusters!



5

'Mini-boss' ghosts need a little more encouragement and a more inventive approach – such as whacking them in the chops with a pool ball – but the end result's the same.



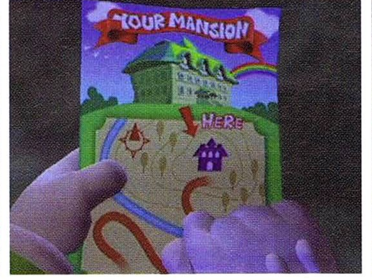
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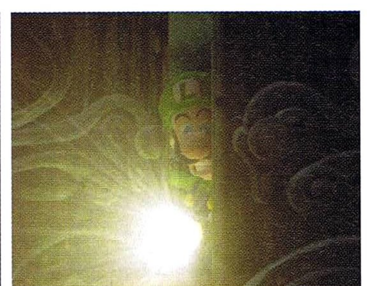
Your reward: cash, and a key. No need to wander the mansion for hours searching for its matching lock, either, as the Game Boy Horror will show you the way.

RACE FOR THE PRIZE

Luigi won his mansion in a competition, but jealous Mario sprinted off to see it first – and disappeared. Armed with just a torch, Luigi sets off to find his bro...









WHO YA GONNA CALL?

If you're seeing things, running through your head, etcetera, etcetera. Luigi's ghostbusting career begins like this...

1 THE FOYER



After being introduced to the ker-razy Dr Gadd, you're dumped in the mansion's first room. And look – there's Toad, sobbing like a grieving widow. Do have a chat, because only through Mr Mushroom here can you save your game. And his theme tune's real cute, too.



Be very careful about where you go treading in the foyer – if you aren't, mischievous ghosts will bring that there chandelier crashing down on Luigi's becapped bonce.



Suck the cloth off this mirror and you'll find a surprisingly poor reflection behind. Staring at the mirrors elsewhere in the mansion will warp you back to this one.



Lesson number one in Nintendo economics – money might not actually grow on trees, but there's plenty of it nestling inside chandeliers. Believe it or not. Suck on!

3 ANTEROOM

It's not just the mansion's chandeliers that have enormous piles of lovely cash stashed away inside them. Vases such as the one sitting on his table here will spin round like tops and spit out wads of money – or in this case, a shiny gold bar – if you direct your vacuum nozzle their way. So give everything a blast of suction.



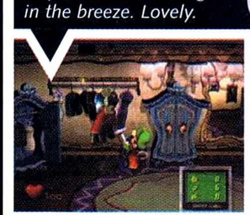
4 WARDROBE ROOM

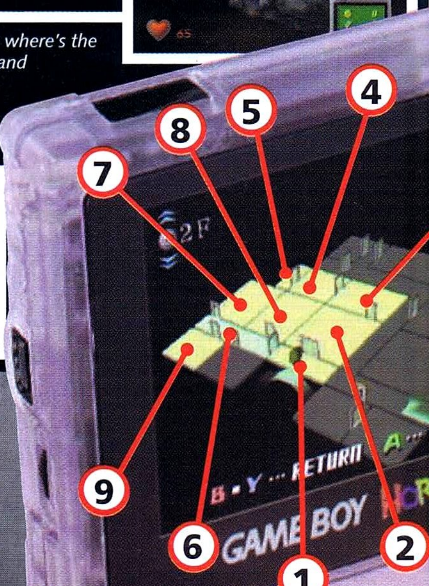


The first 'money ghost' that you encounter is hiding in one of the cupboards in here. You've only got one chance to catch these blue fellas before they vanish for good, but if you get it right riches beyond your wildest imagination can be yours. Well, kind of.

Plenty of ghoulies doing the rounds here – including 'The Green Dustbin', who chucks banana peels on the floor that slip Luigi up in a hilarious manner. He needs a whole lot of hoovering before he gives in, too.

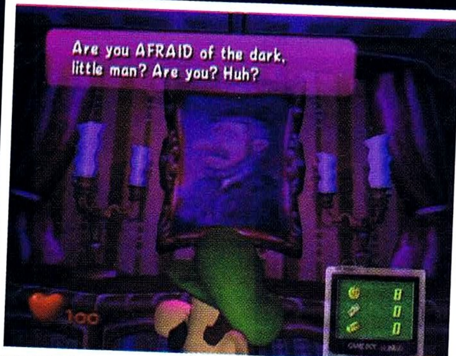
The ghosts have gone – but where's the key? It's on top of the rail, and needs guiding down with the vacuum. Look at the way those coats swing in the breeze. Lovely.





2 THE PARLOUR

Not much doing here – until you blow out the candles and the portraits on the walls start *speaking to you*. It segues nicely into your first proper ghost-sucking incident, with three brainless orange spirits to hoover up, and the key to the next room as your reward.





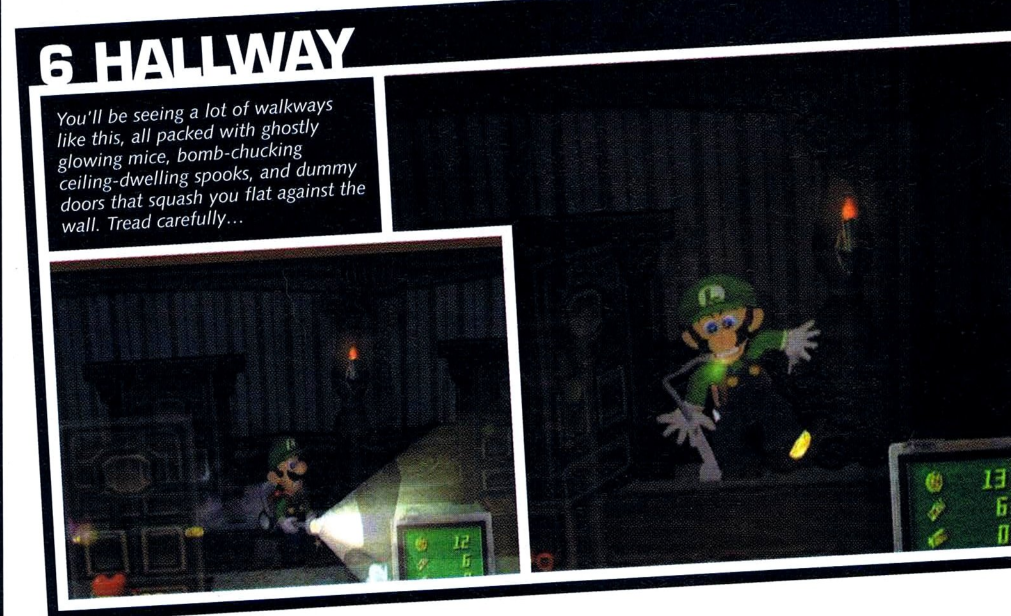
5 BALCONY

Toad isn't the only feature here – when you find the power-up that allows you to spit water, you can feed the plants and win coins.



6 HALLWAY

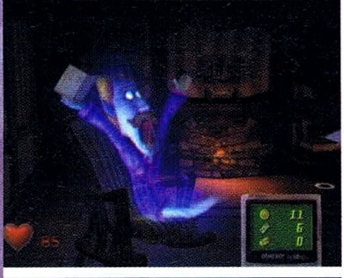
You'll be seeing a lot of walkways like this, all packed with ghostly glowing mice, bomb-chucking ceiling-dwelling spooks, and dummy doors that squash you flat against the wall. Tread carefully…



7 STUDY



The game's first 'Portrait Ghost' – tricky terrors, and unfazed by your hoover. There's a different solution for making each one vulnerable.



In the case of this fella, Neville, the idea is to look away. He'll fade in and out of view for a bit, then yawn. That's your cue to swing around…



…and give him a taste of your Dyson. If you're not quick enough, he'll break free, which lessens your final reward for catching him.

8 MASTER BEDROOM







Portrait Ghost 2 – the lovely Lydia – requires a different tack to Neville, which, oddly, isn't dissimilar to a scene from Nicole Kidman-starring spook-fest The Others. Use your hoover to suck the curtains open and you'll expose Lydia to a draught – when she stands up to redraw them, that's your moment.

9 NURSERY

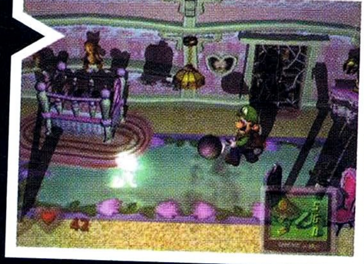
The nursery is as good a place as any to call your Game Boy Horror into play. Whip it out and then use it to search the painting on the wall here for some handy hints on how to get through the next bit.



The coins scattered around the wooden horse here are a hint, too – by rocking the horse with your hoover, sinister dead babber Chauncey will appear to play a game with you.

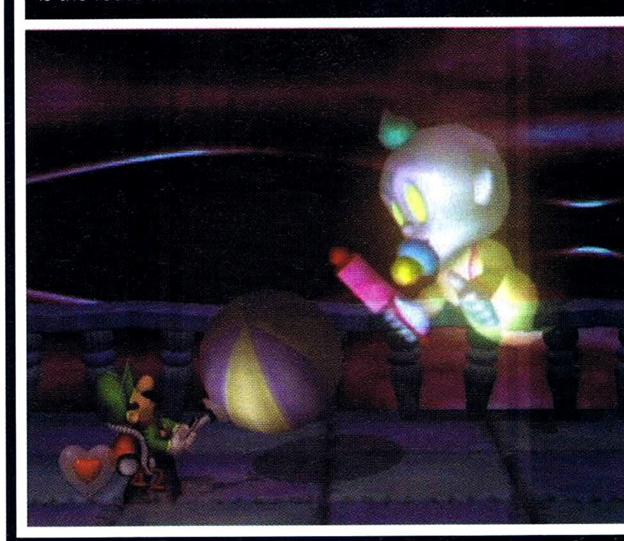


The game is: 'chuck teddy bears at Luigi' – great fun. However, you can put a stop to all that by sucking up and flinging a nearby ball at Chauncey's face. Which leads to…



THE BOSS

…big baby: absolutely terrifying. Chucks balls, levitates rocking horses, shakes a deafeningly large rattle, and generally puts the willies right up us. Bouncing his spherical playthings back into his face is the route to success here.





ON THE BOOS

There are 50 of the Mario universe's more traditional ghosts hidden in the mansion – your Game Boy Horror's bleeping radar will help you find them, but they're pesky little beggars who slide through walls, forcing you to chase them endlessly around different rooms. So why bother? Because certain doors are locked until you've hoovered up enough Boos, see.

SUPER SUCKER

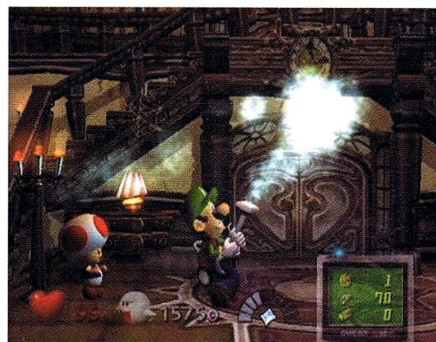
Luigi's hoover might look like Morphy Richards' 'The Boss' – available from all major Argos outlets – but find a magical 'emblem' and its secret powers are revealed…



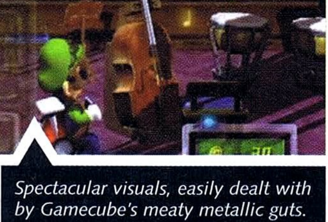
FIRE *Not just a pretty effect, either – flames will severely weaken those pesky spooks, and the lighting of torches can prompt all manner of ghostly appearances.*

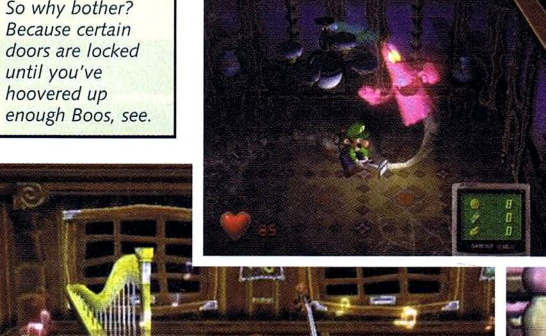


WATER *Use the wet stuff to water plants, wake sleeping ghosts, and extinguish the flaming walls that often stand between you and a slew of new rooms.*



ICE *Accompanied by a suitably authentic 'whooooosh' sound effect, ice can freeze these skittering mini Boos and bring the irritating spooks crashing to the floor. Ha!*

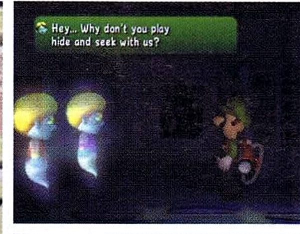




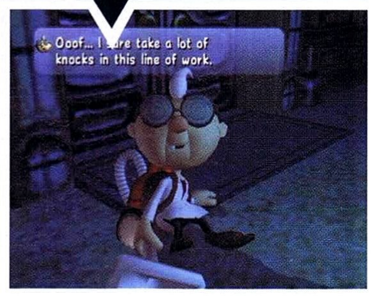
Spectacular visuals, easily dealt with by Gamecube's meaty metallic guts.



"No more V-signs from the Mario brothers," Shigsy once promised…



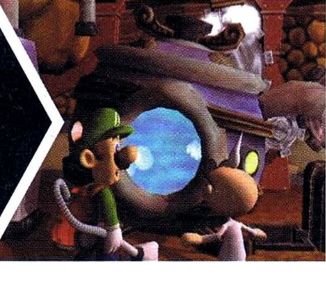
This fella sends Luigi off hunting spooks. Has he a secret agenda?

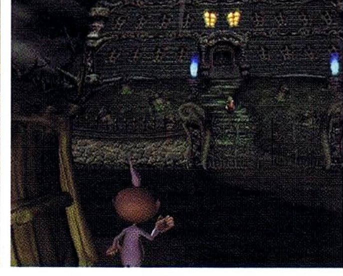




SCREEN SCENE

All of *Luigi's Mansion*'s cut-scenes are rendered in real-time: and they sure do look the business. Observe…







When Nintendo lifted the lid on Gamecube back back in 2000, they accompanied it with footage of a petrified Luigi being chased around a mansion by cackling ghosts. Two years on, and that demo has evolved into a full game. Any good? Silly question…

It's not often Mario takes a back seat to Luigi. And given the quality of the last game Luigi starred in – the awful SNES edutainment title *Mario is Missing* – it's no surprise he's since been consigned to playing second fiddle to his chubbier brother for the last ten years. But now, thanks to the moans of Shigsy's development team when told they'd have to code *another* Mario-based launch game, Luigi's taken top billing once more. And while his Gamecube outing might not have the electrifying, burst-out-of-the-screen brilliance of Mario's many adventures, it *is* bulging with the kind of ingenuity and instantly gratifying play that only Nintendo seem to know how to pull off.

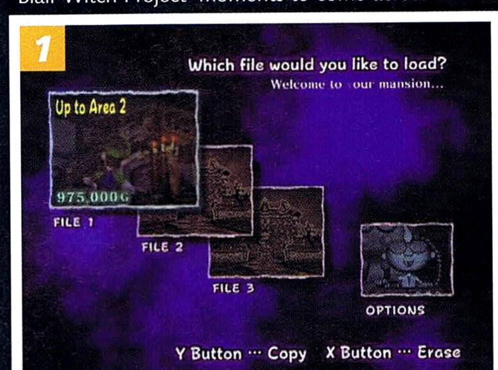
Luigi's Mansion is essentially Ghostbusters: The Game. Every room in the mansion is haunted by a spook or three, and our second-favourite plumber's job is to suck them all up with a hoover-like gadget that's not dissimilar to the Proton Packs that Bill Murray and co hauled around back in the '80s. Even the ghosts owe a debt to the movie – if you recall the token 'cute' ghost, Slimer, then the greedy double-chinned ghoul who pops up in *Luigi's Mansion* should ring a few bells.

So, it's room-searching, ghost-sucking, key-finding action all the way. Back when Shigsy unveiled a handful of rooms from *Luigi's Mansion* at 2001's E3 show, whispers claimed that he'd done the equivalent of "showing the castle entrance from *Super Mario 64*". Rubbish. The *Luigi's Mansion* formula barely alters after the first few minutes of play – which will come as a nasty

SCARY FUNSTERS

Luigi's Mansion is 'funny' scary rather than 'scary' scary by and large – but nevertheless, there are a few 'Blair Witch Project' moments to come across now and then …

1



SAVE SCREEN *Super-creepy, this. The text in the top-right corner reads 'Welcome to your mansion' – but watch carefully and the 'y' will disappear. 'Welcome to our mansion'. Shudder.*

2



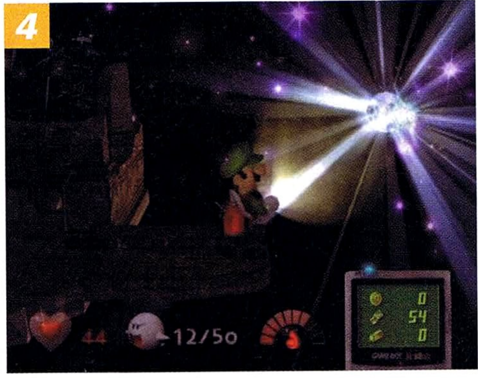
HERE DOGGY *When this mutt's snarling and chasing you about, he's a nuisance. But when he's being sucked into your hoover, whimpering and whining, it all turns mildly disturbing.*

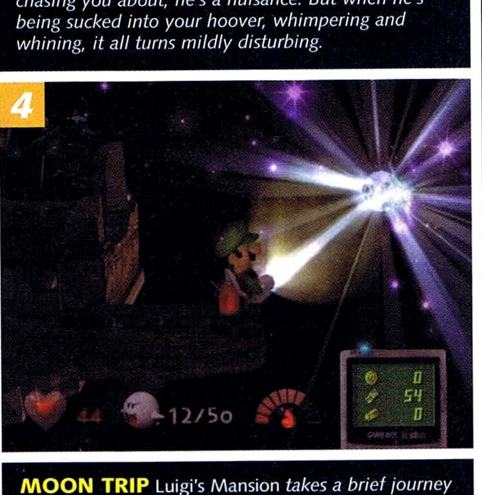
3



CHAIR SCARE *Steal this old lady's balls of wool and she'll start sliding around the room on her roving rocking chair. Yes, yes, it sounds hilarious – but it really gives us the creeps.*

4





MOON TRIP Luigi's Mansion *takes a brief journey into the surreal when one of the mansion's doors leads… into space, where you're asked to blow up a distant moon by firing off a yellow asteroid. Mummy!*

A sparkly platform snakes through space in the game's weirdest room.







surprise to gamers used to Nintendo throwing a totally new idea at them every couple of minutes in groundbreaking games such as *Mario 64* or *Super Mario World*.

Puts the freshness back

Don't fall into the trap of believing that doing the Shake 'n' Vac might be an increasingly monotonous affair, mind. Nintendo's games are famous for 'the feel' – the way Mario and Link and Samus Aran seem to become extensions of your own thoughts through some meticulously-designed controls. And the same magic makes reining in ghosts in *Luigi's Mansion* a pleasure. Because you need to pull back on the analogue stick for a successful suck, the actual *feeling* of tugging on the struggling spook is astonishingly real – and we've seen many a *Luigi's Mansion* player actually lean back in their chair, willing a stubborn wraith into Luigi's backpack.

Even without Nintendo's usual simmering cauldron of unique ideas, *Luigi's Mansion* manages to stay fresh throughout, thanks to the odd ghost who won't react to frantic vacuuming until you've solved a basic puzzle. This could be as simple as clonking them with a punchbag, or grabbing a ball from a nearby pool table and catapulting it into their stomach – but it's moments such as this that prevent Luigi's adventure from descending into monotony. Unless your IQ matches your shoe size, it's unlikely you'll ever be wracking your brain over *Luigi's Mansion* – Luigi's limited list of moves means the solution is invariably 'suck up object and chuck it at spook' – but the simplistic puzzle-solving gives *Luigi's* a decent dollop of variety.

And to mix things up further, the vacuum gizmo can be customised later in the game to shoot water and ice, as well as chuck flames around. That opens the door to a whole new world of puzzles – fairly generic puzzles, admittedly, in the 'douse fiery barrier with water' and 'thaw frozen ghost with fire' vein, but new ones nonetheless. Plus, you won't be able to resist experimenting with your new-found powers – even when the disappointing realisation dawns that you can't set the mansion ablaze.



Deeply effecting

Still, that's probably more than enough about how *Luigi's Mansion* plays – just



GARDEN SECRETS

Around the back of the mansion are a couple of large balconies and a huge ornamental garden. Here's a trip around the grounds…



1 You won't get very far before these spindly tree-hanging spooks start chucking bombs at you…



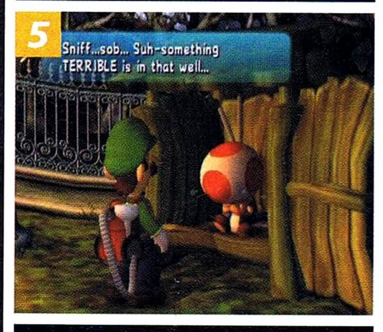
2 …and they're accompanied by these strange miniature spirits that invariably float straight down your nozzle.



3 Pointing your trusty vacuum at the fountain causes the water droplets to float towards you. Nice!



4 Fiddle with the bird feeder, though, and a letter from Mario pops out. Oh, brother, where art thou?



5 Toad's hiding in the outside khazi, and asks you if you've checked out what's down the nearby well.



6 You'll soon wish he'd never mentioned it, as the terrible truth awaits you at the bottom of this ladder…



Ha – let's see Xbox try and pull off visuals like this!

These pesky spooks grab you from behind. Suck 'em up, Luigi!

Vital items are hidden in the strangest – and most disgusting – places.

Nintendo's ghostly bats are inevitably cute little things.

look at the thing. For their first Gamecube game, Shigeru Miyamoto's happy band of coders have chosen not only to show off the purple box's massive range of Xbox-trouncing special effects, but also put the rest of the world's videogame artists to shame with some giddyingly gorgeous – and downright amusing – animation.

Just the semi-transparency and eerie glow of the ghosts is gobsmacking by itself, but throw in a thousand and one incidental effects and you're treating your peepers to some *true* next-generation visuals. Icy breath puffs out of Luigi's mouth; grime billows up from the floor as you sweep the hoover around; flickering shadows are cast by everything from Luigi himself to the creepy-looking trees in the sprawling garden – even the beam from your torch shimmers as a cloud of dust specks floats gently through it.

But it's the way Luigi and his ghostly 'friends' have been brought to life that truly amazes you. The skinny little plumber's face is a picture as he shivers, gasps and grimaces his way through his adventure, his giant conk bouncing up and down as he goes, and the way he's dragged kicking and screaming behind the bigger ghosts is a treat. The spooks are equally impressive – so detailed you'd swear they were constructed from Plasticine rather than sharp-cornered polygons, and so expressively animated that Monsters Inc. looks like a six-year-old's scribblings by comparison.

Put simply, *Luigi's Mansion* is a living cartoon. Yes, we probably said much the same thing about *Super Mario 64* all those years ago – but the difference with *Luigi's* is the *detail*. When you see Luigi shiver with fright as another Boo appears from nowhere behind him, watch a ghost stretch and deform as it's sucked into the hoover's nozzle, glimpse a golden coin bouncing and spinning as it skitters across the floor, it hits you that – in the right hands – a console of Gamecube's power can create the kind of visuals that actually add real *personality* to a game.

The long and the short of it

So, that's that. A superb game, visuals to blow you out of your chair, and a personality and style all its own – the 'Nintendo Difference' in full effect. In all, the perfect Gamecube disc, you might think.

But there's something missing – namely, around twenty hours of playing time. *Luigi's Mansion* isn't the first Nintendo game that shows you its end





Poor Luigi will need a change of trousers after this incident.

It's Mario's cap! But where's the rest of him? We're fwightened...



Boom! The way coins and notes explode from chests is just brilliant.

LONGEVITY WARNING!

Okay, let's sort this out once and for all. *Luigi's Mansion* isn't the longest game in the world. In fact, it's one of the shortest. But you'll have a huge amount of fun during the four hours or so it takes to complete, and the replay value is off the scale, hence the 90 per cent score. Still, it's worth detailing exactly what you're getting for your £40.

4 hrs	6 hrs	7 hrs	9 hrs	14 hrs+
finish the game once.	find all the portrait ghosts.	track down all 50 Boos.	finish with 'A' ranking.	find all money and treasure.

sequence after four hours or so (*Super Mario 64* didn't take much longer to complete) but it *is* the first to give you basically nothing to do after beating the final boss. After seeing off Bowser, *Mario 64* players could head back, collecting new stars, bagging all the coins, and so on. In contrast, after you've opened up every room, *Luigi's Mansion* locks the whole mansion up again and forces you to play through from the beginning with a slightly-improved hoover and a couple of surprises exlusive to the European version (which we won't spoil for you).

Here's the thing, though. If you fall in love with a particular movie, do you emerge from the cinema moaning that it should have been an hour longer? Is the fourth Harry Potter book the best simply because it's three times the size of the others? The choice of whether or not to shell out £40-odd for what's a relatively short game is entirely *your* decision. But we're talking *great* gaming here. World-class, Nintendo-quality gaming. The sort that has you staring bleary-eyed at the screen at 2am because you can... not... stop.

Like we said: entirely your decision.

MARK GREEN



OLD BEFORE ITS TIME

References to Nintendo's back catalogue are, as usual, ten-a-penny. The ghostly composer in the music room challenges you to recognise a classic Super Mario Bros theme; the floating road that leads to Mario's lost star is plainly a 'Star Road' reference; and the game's final scene proves a nasty reminder of end bosses past...

LUIGI'S MANSION



- Some typically flawless game design from Nintendo.
- Animation that'll give Disney a serious inferiority complex.



- Not the longest game.
- Too much retreading of old ground later on.
- Not on a par with Mario's adventures.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Super Mario 64
Nintendo
NGC/1, 96%
The original, and still the best.





9 VISUALS

It's a living cartoon alright – the animation and effects are outstanding.



8 SOUNDS

Top-notch SFX, and a theme tune that will buzz around in your head for months



8 MASTERY

The odd slowdown – play *Rogue Leader* to see why we haven't given this a 10.

6 LIFESPAN

It's as enjoyable as any other Nintendo game. But it lasts four hours.

VERDICT

Nintendo at their dazzling, delirious best: but we can't wait for Mario's return all the same.

90

LOOPS *One of the mainstays of the series, these enormous circular sections of track see you looping-the-loop with tremendous speed. It's rollercoaster-tastic.*

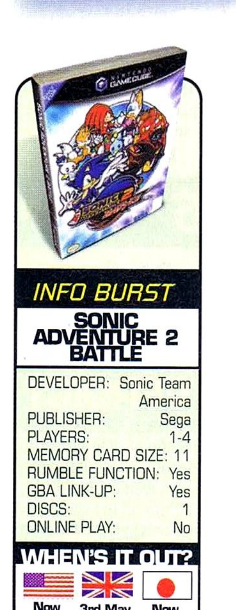
BUMPERS *Another staple ingredient, these handy sprung pads will propel you to dizzy and often hidden heights. Learning to slow down and explore often yields unseen treasures and shortcuts.*

RINGS *The carrot to the donkey, these glittery gold gifts are your life force – every hundred earns you an extra life and as long as you've got at least one, you'll be impervious to attack. The mark of a true Sonic fan, is finding every single ring in each level. Are you up to it?*

LAMP POSTS *These are effectively mid-level save points. Touch them and should you buy it, you'll restart from that point. There are plenty around, which minimises having to retread old ground.*

CHARACTERS *Pick from six protagonists; Sonic, Knuckles and Tails on the Hero side, or Dr. Robotnik, Rogue, or Shadow on the Dark side. Each stage is tailored to the relevant character's skills.*

ENEMIES *Wouldn't be a Sonic game without Robot-o-fied baddies. Whack 'em to release the animal inside, but make sure you're spinning, or risk losing all your hard-earned rings.*





SONIC ADVENTURE 2 BATTLE

A perfect marriage between Nintendo and Sega?



A direct development of *NiGHTS'*… A-Life system, the Chao are ickle critters that are nurtured in Chao World, allowing for limitless possibilities in the way they grow and behave. Follow us for the guided tour…



This is the World itself. You'll start with an egg here, your first task being to hatch it. You can wait for it to emerge naturally, or rub it to speed things up.



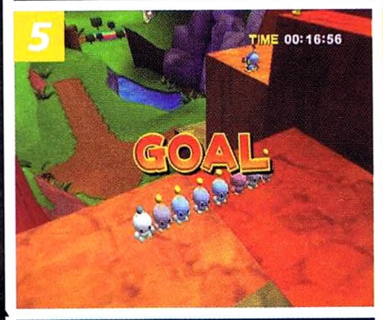
Feeding your new pet with fruit from the nearby trees will increase his stats, as will patting and generally playing with him.



To improve on other stats, deposit the animals and vials you collect in Story Mode. These will have different effects, depending on what they are.



School's out and it's time to teach your Chao a lesson. You'll can also visit the black market to purchase items to alter your pet's nature – Dark or Hero.



Next up is the fun bit – racing and fighting 'em. Various competitions can be entered into and winning improves those stats further still.



One of the best functions is the link-up facility between Cube and GBA. Head to the GBA icon and you can zap your baby to the portable and back. Genius!

COVER YOUR EARS

With talk about videogames ascending to a level worthy of the art world and episodes of The South Bank Show, it's probably fair to say that even the best scripted and voice-acted games are still languishing in Buffy territory (Metal Gear Solid 2, we're looking in your general direction). Sadly, that leaves the likes of Sonic Adventure 2 comparable to, say, Days of our Lives. It really is more shocking than we could have imagined. Do yourself a favour and flick the dialogue to Kanji and choose English subtitles. You'll thank us for it.

If you read our import review of Sonic Adventure 2 a couple of issues ago, you'll already be aware of the sinking feeling it gave us. But one of the benefits of waiting for games to be released in Blighty is that there's always a chance for a Luigi's Mansion-style PAL improvement. Note our use of the word 'chance'. With that in mind, you'd best prepare for the inevitable truth…

And ironically, the truth is that Sega gave us the wrong game. It wasn't a mistake. Or even a close-run decision. It was because of the inherent danger of getting too close to your own product during the creative process. Objectivity goes down the drain, proving that newer isn't necessarily better – especially as *Sonic Adventure*, the spiky one's first real game for six years, is far superior. But we didn't get *Sonic Adventure*. We got the sequel. And that's nothing short of a crying shame.

From the outset, things look promising. Six characters feature, split over two sides, Hero and Dark, each with their own specific traits – Sonic's speed, Knuckles' digging abilities and so on. Enter the story mode, pick a side and you're herded through the one-player game with zero choice in terms of level or protagonist. In the original, there was a central hub, known as the Adventure Stage, where searching and conversing with non-playing characters lead to the unveiling of new Action Stages. Unfortunately, this is entirely missing from *Sonic Adventure 2*, causing no end of thematic chaos. One minute you're speeding through the metropolis as Sonic, the next you're commanding Tails in mini-gear, high atop a scaffolded structure.

It's messy and the pace suffers terribly as a result, but we can forgive such things. They're not *that* important. What does offend, however, is the actual level designs: bar the opener, City Escape and the stunning Green Forest, much of the game's sprawling layout screams 'ordinary'. And we think we know why – *Sonic Adventure 2* is a Sonic Team game, alright. But unless you dig

EXTRA! READ ALL ABAHT IT!

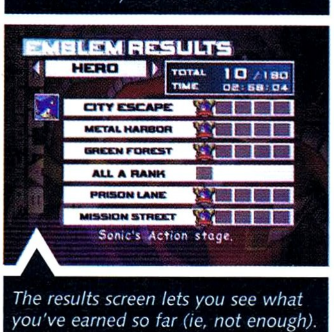
Back in the good old days of 2D, the *Sonic* games could be played in two ways – tearing through to achieve the fastest time, or taking it slowly to discover hidden areas, claim all the rings and secure every Chaos Emerald. *Sonic Adventure 2* is exactly the same, except the new currency is Emblems. Each level has three separate tasks, each awarded with an Emblem, and it's up to you to collect as many as you can. On the way to a full complement, you'll unlock the final stage (Cannon's Core) new multiplayer characters and costumes, the karting minigame, plus new Chao activities, such as Karate. But if you manage to win all 180 Emblems, your final prize is particularly cool – a rendition of the original Green Hill Zone from *Sonic the Hedgehog*, that starts in 2D and slowly morphs into a fully-3D realm to explore. However, we won't be showing you any shots of that – hard graft is the only way you're likely to get to see it.



This is what you're looking for. Only a hundred and seventy-nine to go.



Replaying a level alerts you to the criterion for your next Emblem.



The results screen lets you see what you've earned so far (ie, not enough).

Sonic gets chased down a 'Frisco-style hill by a giant juggernaut.

You get eight minutes to escape Green Forest, but it's one of the best bits.

Both Tails and Dr. Robotnik use the Gear Walker.

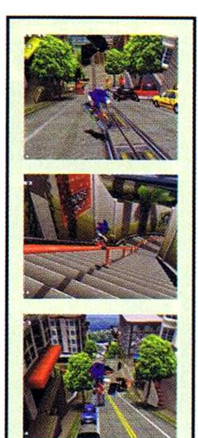
The two-player games can be fun if you're hankering after a race.











KEEP IT SIMPLE

The beauty of Sonic was always its pick-up-and-play quality. You had two moves – run and jump. That's all you needed. And today, not much has changed – there's character-specific periphery (dig, shoot, charge and the like) but ultimately, they serve only to deviate from the 'fast, faster, fastest' philosophy that's always populated the franchise. Much of the time, you'll be pushing up on the analogue stick, with little variation – but then Sonic has never pretended to be anything else. GoldenEye, *this most certainly is not.*

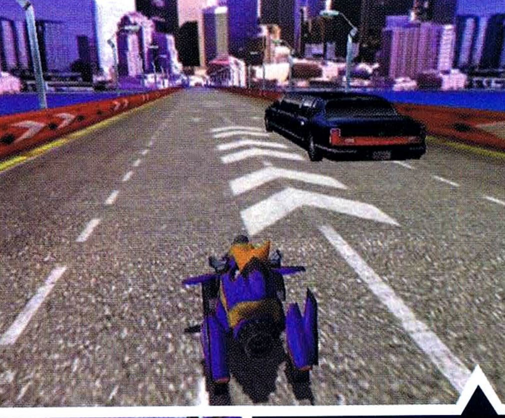
deeper, you wouldn't realise that it's by Sonic Team America. Without being too abrasive, we'd guess that Yuki Naka's input probably started at the word 'Sonic' and ended at 'Adventure', leaving the US team to take care of the '2' part. And it shows. Many of the more pedestrian levels are almost token and rather than enthusing over a continuing quest of exploration and frantic action, you end up resigning yourself to a bunch of almost sub-games – shuffling around as Knuckles, hunting for pieces of the Master Emerald, or using Tails to chase a limo, for example. Not exactly next-generation gaming, is it?

Washing up DC

And speaking of next-gen, as Gamecube owners, we don't expect to see the pop-up of the DC incarnation. Given that the native version of *Sonic Adventure 2* was running the hardware at redline, you might expect *some* clipping. But with four times the polygon count, Gamecube should be capable of a flawless performance.

So, is it all bad news? Nope. There are parts to be applauded, including the always-reliable graphics. Everything's a feast for the oculars – razor-sharp and rock-solid, from the opening freefall by snowboard, to the enormous grandeur of Pumpkin Hill. And, naturally, it all tears by at a seemingly unstoppable speed, provided you're playing with Sonic or his dark alter-ego, Shadow. The Chao World (see 'Gotta Catch 'Em All!') makes for indefinite distraction for Pokémon freaks, and the two-player mode is good for a blast now and again. Additionally, the Karting option opens up later in the game. Don't expect

The three bits of the Master Emerald are somewhere in this outcrop.



This is Tails' second phase – catching the President's limousine. Yawn…

This is reminiscent of Sonic 2's Oil Ocean Zone.

CLASH OF THE TITANS

We're going to make a comparison. It's inevitable, if a shade unjust, but unlikely to be the last word on the subject: *Sonic* versus *Mario*. As such, it's generally accepted that the best 3D platformer ever is *Mario 64* for our own dying king, the Nintendo 64. Sonic certainly has an awful lot to live up to. But it wasn't always that way.

Ten years ago, the same argument was raging between the owners of Sega and Nintendo's respective 16-bit consoles, the Mega Drive and the SNES. Except that the tables were far more balanced: the advent of *Sonic the Hedgehog* in 1991 put Sega on top of the console throne with a cool new mascot, the worldwide *Sonic 2* launch helping to sell more units of the sequel than imaginable. But times changed and where Nintendo raised the gaming bar to near-unreachable heights with *Mario 64*, Sega did not.

Arguably, the games are very different beasts – *Sonic*, a hyperfast exercise in speed, flair and thrills; *Mario*, the deeper, more subtle and ultimately more rewarding title. But the fact remains that Sonic hasn't made the transition to 3D as well as his shorter, fatter, slower rival has, despite the hardware leap and a five-year gap. Will *Mario Sunshine* be the final nail in the coffin, or will we see an return to form for Sonic's third chapter? Time-travellers and clairvoyants can write to the usual address…



Sonic the Hedgehog as you're most likely to remember him: flat and fast.



Mario's beautifully crafted 3D debut.

Mario Kart, but it does the job. There's also 180 Emblems to collect, which harks back to the good old days of 2D, where grabbing every last ring in *Sonic the Hedgehog* was the supreme challenge – bit like those stars in *Mario 64*, really. But, then, that's a whole other story…

Stand and deliver

So, in the end, where does *Sonic Adventure 2* stand? Well, compared to much of what's out there, even Sega's mediocre efforts stand head and shoulders above much of the competition. But that's an unfair comparison – you need to compare like with like. And as we're all painfully aware of Sega's true potential (witness the insane simian sphereing in *Super Monkey Ball* on page 52), then Sonic Team America's latest outing just doesn't cut it. There's still plenty to enjoy, provided you're a major *Sonic* fan, but it's likely that most Nintendo fans are looking for bigger and better things – dungarees, tache and dinosaur included.

NEIL RANDALL

SONIC ADVENTURE 2 BATTLE



- Stunning visuals and extreme speed.
- There's loads to unlock and replay.
- It's Sonic…



- …but not as we know and love him.
- (Mostly) crappy layout and level design.
- Clipping and pop-up.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Super Mario 64
Nintendo
N64/1 96%
The definitive 3D adventure.



8 VISUALS
Absolutely no doubt about it – this is stellar stuff, a great showcase for Cube.



SOUNDS
A mixture of the good, bad and downright awful, particularly the voice 'acting'.



MASTERY
Certainly makes the Cube dance, but the clipping tends to hint at a quick port.



LIFESPAN
Could take as little as a day. If you want to finish it properly, about 80-odd hours. Phew!

VERDICT
The runt of the *Sonic* franchise. Perhaps Yuji Naka will get the reigns back for *Sonic Adventure 3*.



NGC STAR GAME

TIME *This tells you how much time you have to reach the next checkpoint. If it reaches zero, it's game over, man.*

SCORE *Escalates continuously as you drive. The more frantic your racing style, the higher your score.*

POSITION *In order to progress you have to finish in at least the required position – so you don't always have to win.*

TRAFFIC *All over the place and very tricky to avoid at times. Every time you hit one a crash sequence will initiate itself, which is determined by the speed and angle you hit the unfortunate civilian at.*

RIVAL RACERS *There are normally three of them in total, and they can be quite tough. Thankfully, you can ram them off the road in order to gain the advantage.*

TURBO METER *Power-sliding, driving on the wrong side of the road, weaving through tight traffic and scoring near misses builds up the meter. When it fills up it turns red, giving you a massive burst of speed.*

YOUR CAR *It's you. But you'll want to keep your eyes on the road ahead more than anything. There are plenty of vehicles to choose from, all of which are graded by how easy they are to drive. The faster the car is, the harder it is to manoeuvre.*

INFO BURST

BURNOUT

DEVELOPER:	Criterion
PUBLISHER:	Acclaim
PLAYERS:	1-2
MEM CARD PAGES:	4
RUMBLE FUNCTION:	Yes
GBA LINK-UP:	No
DISCS:	1
ONLINE PLAY:	No

WHEN'S IT OUT?

US	UK	Japan
Now	3rd May	TBA

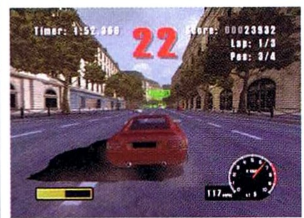
COST: £40

BURNOUT

A launch racer that's super, smashing, great!

BURNOUT SCHOOL OF DRIVING

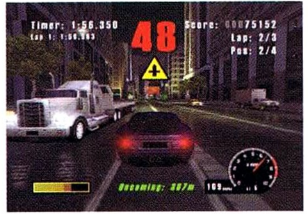
Roads too tough for ya? Here's a guide to *Burnout* success…



Never, repeat, never take your foot off the accelerator. Slow driving will make you look like a right fool when you fail to cross the checkpoint in time.



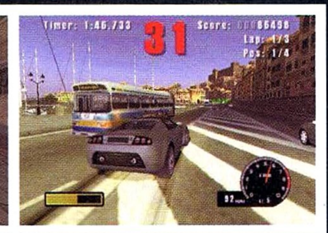
Always travel down the wrong side of the road. Where possible, play chicken with the oncoming traffic – the larger the better – in order to gain speed boosts.



Inconsiderate drivers who attempt to overtake you should, by law, be nudged into the path of the most convenient oncoming juggernaut. Ha!



In the name of road safety, you should power-slide side-on through crowded crossroads and just about every kind of corner that presents itself.



Finally, with your turbo at full, get on the wrong side of the road and boost straight down the middle of the hordes of oncoming traffic. Repeat to win.



The city streets, with their 90-degree turns, are great for racking up the powersliding drift points.

As you can see, the cars are nice and crisp-looking, with that all-important Turtle Wax shine.



Strangely, the police don't seem to care about your crazy driving.



The replays are fantastic, allowing you to witness your nastiest crashes.





There's nothing we love more than smashing stuff up. Whether it's Yoshi's face, dodgy third-party controllers, or roadside cafes in Crazi Taxi, one thing's for certain – the faster we can trash it, the better.

Thank heavens for *Burnout*, then, which boasts high-speed seat-of-the-pants crash action on one tiny GC disk, and all ready for play come launch day. And what's more, it's frickin' ace.

So what's it all about, then? As with any racer, it's about choosing a car, starting a race and trying your hardest to get into first place and stay there. By repeating the process on every available track, not only do you become champion but you (usually) open up some extra goodies. And *Burnout* doesn't really deviate from that formula… much. Okay, so you do have to try and lead the pack over the course of each race, but the means by which you go about it are very refreshing indeed, setting *Burnout* aside from the other racers available.

Racin' remix

The most notable – and perhaps commendable – asset of *Burnout*'s is its seemingly effortless knack for mixing together a number of classic racing games into a highly enjoyable experience. Elements from *Out Run*, *Ridge Racer* and *Crazy Taxi* are all there. First off, there's the bustling traffic-filled roads, dubious legality and pedal-to-the-metal attributes of *Out Run*, the arcadey power-sliding mechanics from *Ridge Racer*, and the utter mayhem and handling of *Crazy Taxi*. Best of all, however, is the fact that *Burnout* rewards you for exercising your traffic-dodging and corner-drifting skills. By weaving in between oncoming cars and holding that power-slide for longer than is absolutely necessary, you accumulate points that increase your turbo meter. Once it's full, you can boost your speed in order to close in on the race leaders or just extend your own lead further.

Just as you'd hope, it all works wonderfully. This system pushes players to take more risks on the road, as the more near-misses and insane cornering manoeuvres you pull off, the faster you're able to go. The thrilling experience of successfully weaving your way through a packed tunnel before skidding through a crossroads and into first place is thrilling to say the least, and it's perhaps for this reason more than any other that we enjoyed *Burnout* so much.

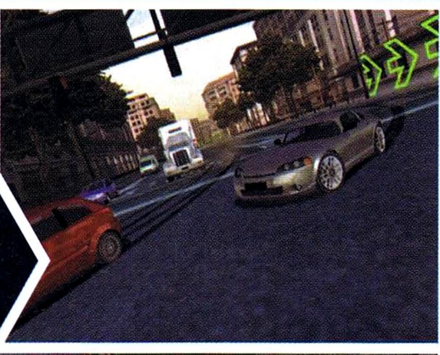
Naturally, all this risk-taking has its disadvantages. By driving like a madman it's inevitable that you're going to end up munching on the back end of a bus at some point – and it's

MORE MOTORING MAYHEM

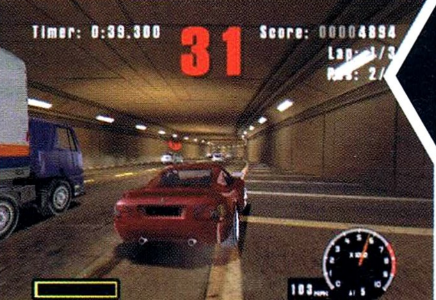
Burnout modes to test the best…



CHAMPIONSHIPS *Tough. Unlock more tracks by working your way through the existing ones and finishing inside the qualifying positions.*



HEAD-TO-HEAD *Just you, a mate and the open road. Great fun – being able to send your mate speeding into oncoming traffic is too good to miss.*

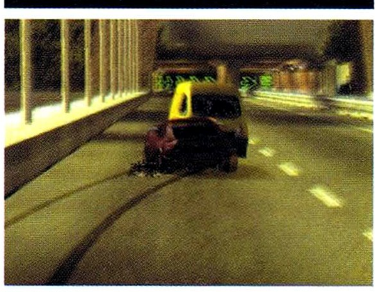


FACE OFF *These races pit you against a solitary driver in a new vehicle. If you manage to beat it over three laps, it's yours to race in.*



SURVIVAL *Race through each track without crashing. If you do, it's game over. Once you've unlocked it, you can tackle the tracks in any order you like.*

Some sections of track have barriers in the middle, so if you're on the wrong side of the road, you're stuck there.





NO EXIT

You don't really have too much freedom in Burnout – sliproads are blocked off by flashing arrows to help guide you through the city, and should you decide to turn around and drive the other way a giant, red neon wall appears to stop you from going any further. Still, we suppose the tracks are pretty large.



The Gamecube's joypad makes even the trickiest manoeuvres easy to pull off and control.



Staying on the wrong side of the road is the best way to earn your turbo – but crashes are inevitable.

here that *Burnout*'s main gimmick comes into play…

Car carnage

Some may find it irritating as hell. Others, no doubt, will find it all highly amusing. As far as we're concerned, the crashes are a smart diversion that'll only bug you if you end up piling into traffic every couple of minutes. Every time you wrap yourself around a lamp post, lorry or central reservation, the game cuts to a sequence that varies depending on the speed and trajectory with which you hit the object. These sequences are actually very well done, are by far the best digital reproductions of horrifying car crashes we've seen. If you ramp up the speedometer, flip yourself up a nearby kerb and launch your free-wheeling vehicle sideways into an oncoming bus, you can get some pretty spectacular – and highly devastating – results.

Now, the reason that this will irritate some people is that, because you're constantly battling to get to the next checkpoint for your time bonus, crashes seem to suck all your time away. Waiting for your car to be plonked back on the road can be a very painful experience. As infuriating as this can be, though, it does have one thing going for it – building up serious tension as you're accelerating through the streets. So while you're desperately trying to weave through traffic, your pulse is racing with each near-miss or heart-stopping power-slide through busy crossroads, and all the while you're hoping and praying that you don't end up showering the roadside with your smashed windscreen. If you ask us, you can't knock that kind of white-knuckle gaming.

Crash and burn

So, if you hadn't guessed already, we're quite fond of *Burnout*. After playing the PS2 version extensively, it's also worth noting that *Burnout* GC is far and away the more accomplished version. Firstly, the visuals are *far* crisper, with GC's hardware doing away with the nasty jaggies and distortion from the previous version. The crashes are also more detailed, with CPU-controlled cars sporting as much damage as your own vehicle.

Elsewhere, the presentation continues to be of a high standard. The vehicle models are well constructed, there are saveable crash replays so that you can keep a record of your most devastating pile-ups, and the music – which gets increasingly frantic as your time ticks away – is also nicely fitting for this manic arcade racer. There are also plenty of modes to get to grips with, from the standard time trials to a face-off mode that pits you against a difficult rival with the chance to win

Lap 1: 2:43.416

Lap: 2/3
Pos: 4/4

124 MPH

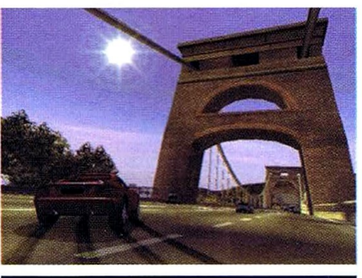
The big arrows help guide the way. Later courses allow you to drive down different routes and paths on the same track.

IN THE ZONE

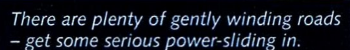
Burnout's arcade-style racing is a real blast from the past, feeling very much like some classic racers of days gone by. Combined with the turbo boost you get as a reward for your risk-taking, Burnout becomes a reaction-based twitch-gamer's paradise as you dodge the traffic.

PRETTY AS A PICTURE

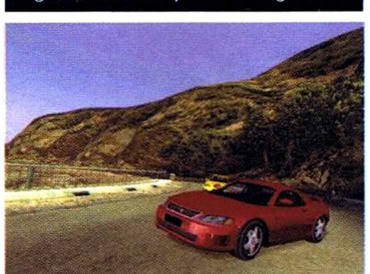
Burnout is one nice-looking racer. The tracks offer impressively diverse environments, ranging from quaint harbour towns to busy motorways and open city streets and boulevards. What's more, by the time you open up the marathon stages you'll get to race round *massive* courses that link together each track into one gigantic whole. Combined with the beautifully realised skyscapes and twilight effects, cruising (and bruising) your way around the world is a joy to behold.

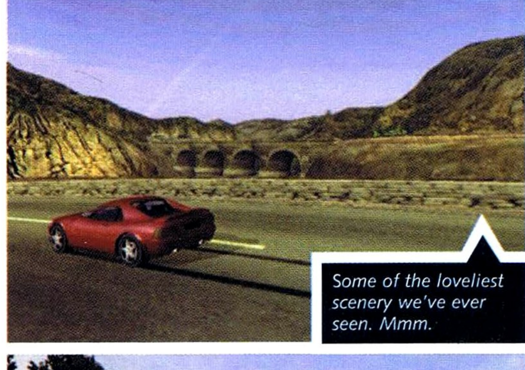


Ah, yes. The old sun glare and lense flare – effects that refuse to go out of fashion.



There are plenty of gently winding roads – get some serious power-sliding in.



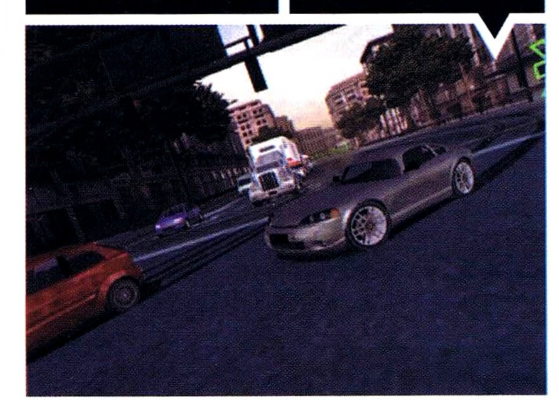


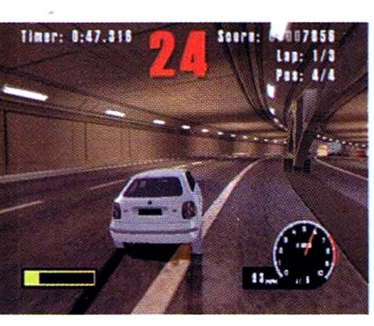
Some of the loveliest scenery we've ever seen. Mmm.

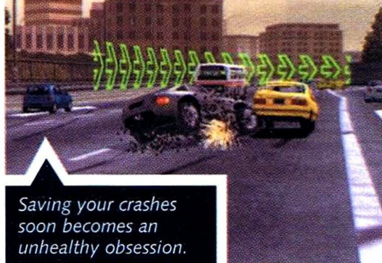


Ahhh, a match made in heaven. Two hundred yards down the road, these metal beasts will be joined...

...in matrimony to the sound of tyres squealing and glass shattering, bringing tears of joy to our eyes...







Saving your crashes soon becomes an unhealthy obsession.

extra vehicles. On top of that there's an enjoyable head-to-head multiplayer.

So, is there anything wrong with *Burnout*? Well, it's ultimately quite shallow, as all you're theoretically doing is keeping your finger on A and powering through the courses as quickly as possible, and the random nature of the CPU cars can be annoying. Many of the courses are variations on each other, with different routes through inter-linking stretches of road. But then *Ridge Racer* was hardly blessed with a staggering variety.

To be perfectly honest, if you're looking for a thrillsome no-brainer of a driving game then this is exactly what you're after. If it's a *GT3*-beater you had your hopes on, then you'll have to wait a little longer. For the rest of us, *Burnout* proves to be rewarding, exciting, addictive and highly enjoyable. Get it in, we tell you.

GERAINT EVANS

BURNOUT



- Fast, furious and instantly accessible.
- An original take on the racing genre.
- Very challenging yet highly enjoyable.



- A little shallow in the long run.
- Crashes can get slightly annoying.
- A four-player mode would have been nice...

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Crazy Taxi
Acclaim
NGC/63, 81%
More GC-powered dangerous driving.





8 VISUALS

Fast and smooth with some fantastic-looking scenery. Generally lovely all round.



8 SOUNDS

Unobtrusive music that suits the mood of the game. Engine noises aren't bad, either.



7 MASTERY

Okay. Not pushing the Gamecube too hard, but what's there is slick and accomplished.

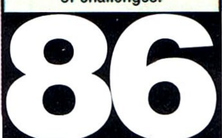


7 LIFESPAN

Lacking in real depth, but the action is tough and you'll always go back for a quick blast.

VERDICT

A great take on the racing genre that offers thrills aplenty and loads of challenges.



86



YOUR BIKE *A serious piece of kit this. Sounds like a jet engine powering up and can reach speeds in excess of 900mph. Unfortunately, all the bikes are pretty much identical.*



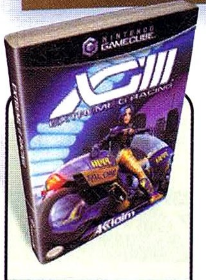
TRACK *These are mental. Loops, twists, vertical drops, plunges under the ocean and sweeping descents around towering skyscrapers. Thankfully, the tracks are wider than in previous instalments, making them much easier to navigate.*

RIVAL RACERS *All rivals come in teams of two (you also have a team mate). They're actually pretty clever as racers go, and will constantly try to boost past you and drop mines in your way.*

AMMO GAUGE *Once this runs out you won't be able to attack. Make sure you stock up on energy in the pit lanes.*

SHIELD GAUGE *This is the most important of the lot. It tells you how much life you have before you explode, and whether or not you have the capacity to use that vital turbo button.*

NGC STAR GAME





WEAPONS *Cycle through these with the Z button. They range from shield-sucking weapons to homing missiles and the devastating rail gun – once you've bought the weapon upgrade, you can use it as often as your ammo bank will allow.*

INFO BURST

EXTREME G3

DEVELOPER:	Acclaim
PUBLISHER:	Acclaim
PLAYERS:	1-4
MEMORY CARD SIZE:	6
RUMBLE FUNCTION:	Yes
GBA LINK-UP:	No
DISCS:	1
ONLINE PLAY:	No

WHEN'S IT OUT?



US	UK	Japan
Now	May	Now

COST: £40

EXTREME G3

Makes Alton Towers look like a pleasant walk in the park...

By the time you get to the 1000cc class you'll need all your reflexes and weapons to stay ahead of the pack.

These trails make blasting your remaining rail-gun ammo up the enemy exhaust pipe nice and easy.



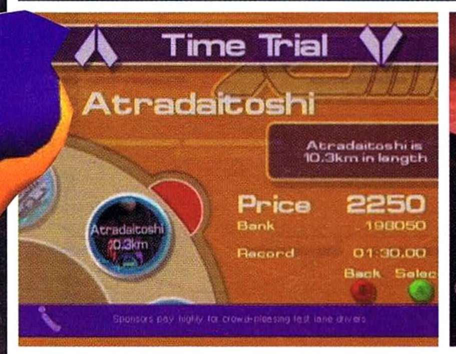


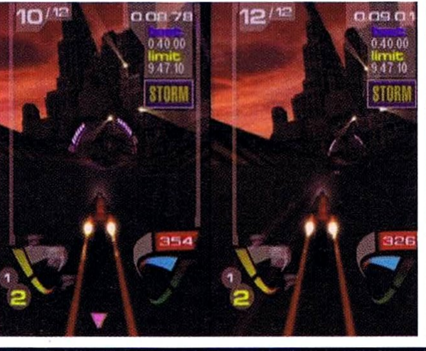
The track design is awesome. Here, you've plunged into an underwater tunnel on Oceania.

MODES FOR YOUR MONEY

So how much extreme racing do you get for your cold, hard cash, then? Well, in terms of modes, the main one is Career. Here, you have to work your way through all ten tracks in order to come out on top. Each time you finish all the tracks you get to go up a speed class, of which there are four in total. Career mode can also be played co-operatively with an extra player. On top of this is Arcade mode, which allows up to four players to race, and there's also a smart new variation on the age-old Time Trial, which allows you to bet on whether or not you can beat the best times.







With all that stunning scenery and blistering speed, you'd think a four-player mode was out of the question, but Acclaim have pulled it off brilliantly, keeping the frame rate very slick.

The prospect of our beloved XG series being lost to PS2 was pretty hard to bear – after all, Extreme G *was the N64's answer to* Wipeout *and* *complemented* F-Zero X *perfectly with its weapons-based racing. XG3 might just have missed Gamecube's launch – but it's certainly the best version so far.*

If you've played any of the previous games before you'll know what to expect as far as the basics are concerned with *Extreme G3*. Choose a bike, arm yourself to the teeth with some pyrotechnic weapons of mass destruction and defy gravity around a selection of utterly insane tracks.

So the basics are in place, then – but *XG3*'s mechanics are a little different this time round. Rather than picking up weapons on the racetrack, you now have to upgrade your chosen bike by winning races, collecting cash and blowing it all in the XG Mall – a shop where you can purchase a variety of bike add-ons such as rockets, disruptors and shield and engine enhancements. The weapons themselves draw energy from a generic ammo bank that can be refuelled by driving over purple energy strips that line the sides of the tracks. Your turbo also works differently this time round. Rather than just starting off with three boosts, you now draw turbo-power from another energy reserve – your shields. Again, this can be refuelled via the green energy strips – normally situated near the starting grid.

It's hardly the most innovative of features, granted – *F-Zero* used the exactly the same idea – but this really makes a difference to the kind of tactics you use. Resourceful management of your weapon and shield energy is key to success in *XG3*. While some players may like to use up their boost early to get some distance between the pack, other will prefer to hang back and drain the oppositions' shields before making a dash for the finish in the last quarter of the race. So, while *XG3* is pretty basic in its racing mechanics, there is a certain amount of depth to the experience.

Extreme shorts

As futuristic racers go, *Extreme G3* is very good. The speed is there, the track design is spot-on, the weapons are unique and the later stages are seriously tough – but despite all the basic ingredients being present and correct, there are still a couple of points which really irritate us.

First of all, there isn't enough of it. There are only ten tracks in all, most of which are so stunning you'll wish Acclaim would have at least put a few extra secret ones in as a reward for all your hard work. Secondly, *XG3* can often feel very soulless some times, and then ridiculously frustrating at others. In one race, for example, you may find yourself racing on an empty road, with bikes either miles behind or ahead of your position. On others you might be sandwiched between three bikes who do nothing but chuck mines in your face every five seconds.

Lastly, we wish Acclaim would have included a variety of bikes with different characteristics. Each and every racer handles pretty much the same way, so there's no incentive to explore other characters and as a result the longevity of *XG3* suffers.

Still, when all is said and done, *XG3* a very solid racer that'll provide hours of entertainment and, combined with the multiplayer modes, is a game you'll still revisit for a quick speed fix months down the line.

GERAINT EVANS

EXTREME G3



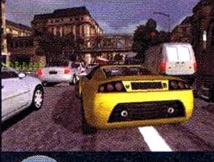
- *Very* fast without a hint of slowdown.
- Superb tracks that are instantly accessible.
- Supremely slick four-player mode.



- Feels a little soulless
- No diversity in bike models and handling.
- Some more tracks would have been nice…

IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Burnout
Acclaim
NGC/67, 86%
Acclaim's other, more realistic launch racer.





8 VISUALS
Ultra-fast, ultra-slick and solidly designed. Very nice.



8 SOUNDS
Pumping dance tracks and plenty of smart engine and weapons effects.



8 MASTERY
So far so good. *Extreme G3*'s speed alone puts GC's power to good use.



8 LIFESPAN
Easily beaten inside a couple of weeks, but you'll revisit it for a quick speed fix.

VERDICT
The best *XG* to date and a solid futuristic racer for Gamecube.



POINTS The more bananas you collect, the higher you'll score, and the higher you score, the quicker you'll unlock the minigames. Points are also awarded for finishing the level in a fast time.

TIMER Sometimes (as in this level), the time limit is very generous. On other levels you'll really have to rag the hairy backside off that monkey to hit the finish line before the clock runs down.

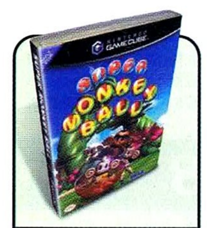
BANANAS Snag 100 of the tasty yellow fruits and you earn an extra life. You only have a limited number of continues to begin with, and you won't get far without a couple of spare chimps in reserve.

GOAL Break the tape between the goalposts to end the level. You can do it from either side, and there are sometimes bonus bananas or secret exits tucked away somewhere behind it.

SPEEDO Knowing your monkey's speed isn't of any real use during the main game, so you won't find yourself glancing at this particular readout too often. If you do, you'll probably fall off the edge anyway.

MAP This little map in the corner is essential for locating bananas, since it's easy to get disoriented when the screen spins around so quickly.

NGC STAR GAME



INFO BURST

SUPER MONKEY BALL

DEVELOPER:	Amusement Vision
PUBLISHER:	Sega
PLAYERS:	1-4
MEM CARD PAGES:	3
RUMBLE FUNCTION:	Yes
GBA LINK-UP:	No
DISCS:	1
ONLINE PLAY:	No

WHEN'S IT OUT?



US	UK	Japan
Now	3rd May	Now

COST: £40

SUPER MONKEY BALL

Rolling monkeys go virtually bananas in Gamecube's most self-consciously quirky title.



Putting – monkey-style! The critters have little clubs inside their balls.

The goal tape has a nice elastic feel to it as you roll on through.

Mind those edges – if you roll too fast you'll bounce over them.

This level has a tilting section that rolls you back. A bit annoying, it is.

SNEAK PEEK

You don't actually have to earn the required number of points to have a look at all three minigames. As soon as you score enough to unlock just one of them, unplug the memory card before choosing. After you finish playing, put the memory card back and reset the console. That way you can decide which of the three you want before spending all your points on it. Sneak little lot, us.

HAIR-TEARINGLY HARD

The main game takes the form of three increasingly tough sets of levels, although each set isn't always arranged in order of difficulty. You might find one particularly twisty level robs you of a couple of continues before you figure out how to complete it, but the next could be just a simple blast to the goal line. Once you've finished all three sets, there's the agonisingly hard Master difficulty level – you'll need the patience of saint if you're to beat it without succumbing to the urge to smash your controller through the TV screen.

Sega's first Gamecube title is a conversion of their obscure arcade action-puzzler, minus the original banana-shaped joystick, and with an impressive range of new multiplayer modes and extra levels. More than six months after the Japanese release it might have lost some of the lustre that persuaded us to award it 92 per cent in NGC/61, but it's still among the pick of the UK launch titles.

Super Monkey Ball remains one of the most unusual things on Gamecube. It doesn't have the kind of graphics that will have people staring in awe at the demo displays in your local software store, nor does it possess anything by way of storyline, special abilities, or unforgettable scenes. Yet once you've picked up the pad and spent no more than a couple of minutes playing with a super-sensitive control system that uses just the main analogue stick and no buttons, you'll be hooked. It's an amazingly simple idea, expanded to fill a game that's so staggeringly challenging, most players won't have a hope in hell of ever completing it.

The aim is to roll a ball (with a monkey inside, naturally) through a series of convoluted levels, while avoiding traps and collecting bananas. That's the gameplay in a nutshell. If you remember *Marble Madness* from the 80s (see page 58 for more), *Monkey Ball* will seem quite familiar – the checked surface of many of the levels is an obvious homage to Atari's classic coin-op. The major difference is that with *Monkey Ball* being a product of the 3D era, you're not limited to rolling the ball through fixed-perspective landscapes. Instead, whenever you push the joystick the whole playfield tilts and spins, so the ball appears to roll with gravity rather than under its own power. People who are expert at those little ball-bearing puzzles you get in Christmas crackers will feel right at home here.

Easy does it

To begin with, the pace is reasonably sedate. Early levels introduce the basic technique of getting your monkey-containing ball moving and guiding it through the finish gates, before providing glimpses of the kind of horrors that await in the Expert and Master modes – moving obstacles, curved floors, needle-thin ledges, and a selection of truly devious traps. Luckily you often get a choice of routes through the harder courses, so there will sometimes be a banana-stashed path for experts alongside a barren-but-easy route for wusses. Keep taking the soft option and you'll feel like you're cheating, plus you'll have to tackle every level on your journey through the game's four difficulty settings. The braver you are, the more warp gates you'll find to propel your encapsulated chimp towards the ending.

Sensitive

A game like this lives or dies by the accuracy of its controls, and there are no moments when you can blame anything other than your own mistakes for sending the ball plummeting thousands of feet off the edge of the course (where there no doubt rests a

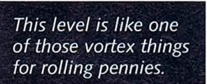
MARBLE MADNESS

This is the game that surely inspired Monkey Ball. Atari's 1984 arcade hit Marble Madness had a trackball analogue controller to guide a marble through a handful of twisting, checkered levels, and included many similar features – moving enemies, rolling waves, tilting bridges, and tight mazes. Now that Infogrames owns the Atari brand, a 3D update would be most welcome.



Check out the radar to spot bananas.

Go for the goal or the fruit? Tricky.

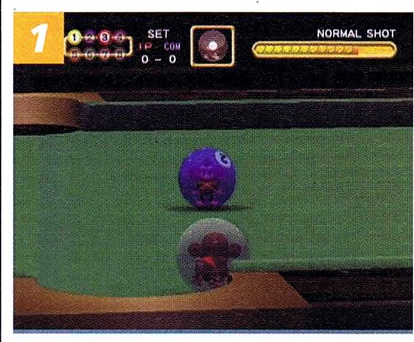


This level is like one of those vortex things for rolling pennies.



MONKEY MAGIC

On top of the massive one-player game, there are six additional modes for up to four monkeys. Sega have certainly packed a lot of added-value stuff onto this disc.



BILLIARDS *Like pool, but with the less-forgiving US rules – and monkeys, natch. Sink simians by lining them up in an overhead view, then watch them fly in 3D close-up.*

GOLF *Putting, really, as there are no tee shots and the monkeys can't be whacked into the air (at least, not unless you smack them over the edge of the 18-hole course).*



FIGHT *Brilliant with four players. Each monkey has a springy fist with which to lamp the others into the void. Collect power-ups and your fist can grow to the size of a house.*



BOWLING *You have to stop an oscillating marker to aim the ape, hit the right part of the power gauge, then add spin with L and R... then cross your fingers and hope.*



TARGET *While away hours gliding chimps towards distant targets, in a mini-game that plays a lot like Pilotwings. Miss, and they end up at the bottom of a very deep ocean.*



RACE *Pegging it around a selection of tracks with power-ups that zap opposing monkeys or turn their balls into cubes. Mario Kart it ain't, but it's a break from the main game.*

massive graveyard of unlucky apes and bits of glass). It shows how slick and responsive the Gamecube's stick is, and how useful that rubberised grip can be when the controller gets sweaty halfway through a level.

The monkeys start shrieking and flapping if the ball rolls too close to the edge, which is a nice, panic-inducing visual cue. You need to be utterly precise with your movements, and if you push the stick too far when trying to get the ball back on track, the monkey will end up tumbling over the other side. But you *will* dust yourself down, pick the controller off the floor (if it still works after you just tried to twist it in half), take a deep breath and try again. And again. And again.

That's the bizarre appeal of *Monkey Ball* – no matter how many times you fall off the same, seemingly impossible part of a course, you'll want to return for another attempt because the whole thing looks so ludicrously simple. There's no reason why you shouldn't be able to roll a monkey down the pixel-wide E string of a giant guitar. There are no corners to negotiate – you just push the joystick straight forwards and glide to the finish, right? Wrong. Halfway across, the stick seems sensitive enough to react to the pulse in your thumb, the monkey starts to wobble and squeal, and it slips to its doom. Continue? It's almost impossible to resist selecting Yes, for some bizarre reason.

Son of Monkey Ball?

As you become more proficient at controlling the ball, you'll probably become irritated by a few little things that the designers should have considered changing. The camera, a basic function that's flawed in so many 3D games, has the tendency to swing around when you don't want it to, or stay put when it would be far more useful moving to a different position. The last thing you want is to be rolling towards the screen, yet it happens whenever you make a 180° turn, and you can't use the C-stick (that's C for Camera, Sega) to move to a better vantage point.

The inconvenience of falling off when you're well into a level is to be expected, but it's no fun at all getting put back to the start and having to

GROCERY STORE

Every few levels you get a bonus stage filled with delicious bananas, and 30 seconds to collect as many as you can. They're an excuse to show off the game's best visual effects, such as reflective surfaces, rippling floors and glossy lighting, not to mention the best opportunity to collect some of the 100 energy-packed monkey treats required to earn an extra life.

Try not to land on the missing centre piece, there's a good monkey.

A drowned ape. There's no finer sight than this.





Build up speed to get to this tilted goal tape.



The thinner the guitar string, the bigger the bonus.



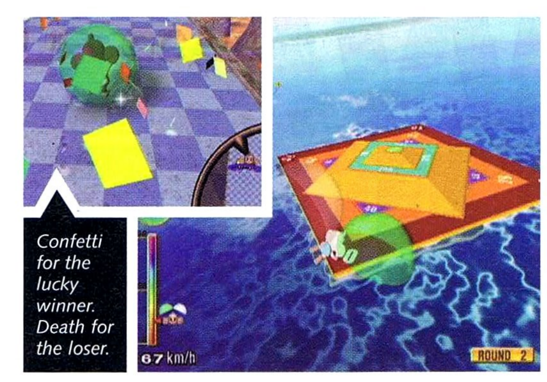
repeat the entire thing just for the chance to fall off all over again when you get to a bit you haven't seen before. *Marble Madness* handled it better, dropping you back near to where you died, at the expense of a few wasted seconds.

Buy it now

However, the multiplayer modes are second only to *Smash Bros Melee*, and are reason enough to consider making this one of your first UK Gamecube purchases (along with a few extra controllers). Simple golf, billiards and bowling minigames provide ample tests of your monkey-sporting prowess, with target practice, split-screen racing and a brilliantly frantic fighting game completing the new options that make the home conversion a far more rounded and long-lasting experience than the original coin-op.

Uncommonly difficult and yet strangely compelling, there's nothing else on the horizon from Sega, or any other third party, that's likely to match the star quality and quirky charm of *Super Monkey Ball*.

MARTIN KITTS



Confetti for the lucky winner. Death for the loser.

SUPER MONKEY BALL



- Plenty of minigames.
- No complicated controls.
- Slick, arcade-style graphics.



- Very frustrating.
- Awkward automatic camera system.
- Single-player mode can be exhausting.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Denryu Ira Irabou
Hudson
NGC/12 65%
Puzzle game otherwise known as *Irritating Maze*.



7 VISUALS

Fairly basic, but extremely sharp. Looks like a proper arcade game.



7 SOUNDS

Some nice tunes and slightly repetitive simian screeches and squeaks.



8 MASTERY

Forces you to learn how to be very gentle with that sensitive analogue stick.



9 LIFESPAN

Knock off a couple of marks if you're never likely to play the multiplayer modes.



VERDICT

A challenge for hardcore gamers, and loads of bonus features for everyone else. Weeks of sleepless nights.

88



We reviewed the Japanese version of *Wave Race* back in NGC/61.



OPPONENTS The original Wave Race had three computer-controlled opponents, while Blue Storm provides tighter racing by adding a further four. Get close enough and your rider will automatically kick and punch them off their jetskis.

WAVES Nothing else comes close to matching the beautiful looks and powerful feel of this undulating racing surface. By comparison, even the best water effects in other games seem like sticky pools of jelly covered with clingfilm.

WAKES The spray churned up by the jetskis isn't just for show – the wake of a rival's machine can wash you off course, forcing you to lean into it in order to keep travelling in a straight line.

BUOYS The courses are marked out by floating buoys. Each one you pass makes your jetski go faster, until you earn an optional turbo boost. Miss five and you're out of the race.

INFO BURST

WAVE RACE BLUE STORM

DEVELOPER:	NSTC
PUBLISHER:	Nintendo
PLAYERS:	1-4
MEM CARD PAGES:	12
RUMBLE FUNCTION:	Yes
GBA LINK-UP:	No
DISCS:	1
ONLINE PLAY:	No

WHEN'S IT OUT?

US	UK	Japan
Now	3rd May	Now

COST: £40

WAVE RACE BLUE STORM

The wettest racer of all time splashes down.



It didn't look quite like this in the N64 version, but it's the same course.

STORMY WEATHER









You can select which of the available courses to race next, and the three-day weather forecast means you can match the tracks to the most appropriate wave conditions. Some of them are doubly difficult in bad weather, whereas others just look particularly good illuminated by lightning under the dark clouds of a thunderstorm. Because you can gain such a lot of speed by surfing down the side of a wave, the choppy conditions don't always hamper your time-trial efforts, either.



QUICK START

The old Wave Race turbo-start system returns for the sequel. Hit the accelerator when the lights go green to max out your power gauge and earn an instant turbo. The slower you react, the fewer lights on the meter you'll get, but since you can do stunts to fill in the blanks you tend to reach your top speed fairly quickly anyway.



The trail of water from the back of the jetski is another great touch.



Use the C-stick to switch between four camera angles in replay mode.



Choppy water spoils your balance, so avoid it.



Getting the racing line perfectly right is a great achievement.









Back in the day, Wave Race 64 was the only game that made you feel like you were racing over real water. More than four years later, we've got the first title to actually supersede that N64 breakthrough, as Nintendo demonstrates why jetskis are a hundred times more exciting than any other mode of transport.

Aquatic racers have always tended to fall into the *Hydro Thunder* category – you might as well be travelling on slippery blue tarmac for all the sensation of flux and buoyancy they provide. A couple of recent PS2 titles have had a decent crack at simulating moving water, but nothing has ever come close to the realism of the original *Wave Race 64*.

So it has been left up to Nintendo again to show everyone else how to do it. *Blue Storm* takes the core of *Wave Race 64*, retains the most important parts such as the handling and wave physics, and improves the formula in almost every way imaginable. If there's any game you'd want to show off to owners of other consoles, then – because it can be compared to so many inferior clones – it's this one.

Why does it work so well? If it was so easy to define then somebody else would have been able to reproduce it over the last few years. *Blue Storm's* amazingly convincing water is the first thing that grabs your attention during the pre-race fly-by, with schools of fish swimming through the weed and rocks beneath its glistening surface. The way reflections break up in ripples is just one of many effects we've never seen implemented with such skill, as is the spray that showers from the back of the speeding jetskis and dribbles off the camera.

Learning to swim

But it isn't just a technical demo, because the movement of the water





Now the wooden posts in the lake can be battered down, leaving a clear run next lap.





Once again, the jetskis are pretty good at speeding over solid ice.



WIPEOUT FUSION

Crashing into things can be a big problem. Until you learn the course layouts, it's unclear which objects in the water can be smashed out of the way (such as boxes) and which parts will bring you to a dead stop or throw you off the jetski (such as boulders). Worse, if you do fall off you usually end up facing the wrong way when you get back on.

STUNT RACER

Blue Storm's expanded selection of tricks can be put to use in all of the game's modes.





HOOP TRICKS The stunt mode is exactly the same as the one in the N64 version. Rather than race around the courses, you have to make measured progress through a series of checkpoints, pulling stunts and steering through hoops to build up points.

SHOW OFF You can boost your power meter by doing tricks during a race. Unlike in the stunt mode, you don't get penalised for repeating the same move, so you might as well just do the quickest and safest one all the time. Falling off makes you look stupid.





has a real effect on your performance. Random waves knock you into the air, causing a slight loss of speed and control, while predefined wave patterns form a real racing challenge.

Certain parts of the courses have regular swells coming in from a particular direction, and they can be used to surf alongside for a speed boost, or as ramps to propel your jetski clear of oncoming hazards. Using them as the designers intended calls for good timing, and if you don't get it right you can just ride gently over the top or lean forwards and duck beneath the surface to avoid them.

Riding in among a pack of computer racers means you'll be buffeted by the wakes churned up by the other jetskis, making the controller vibrate in your hands as you fight to maintain your balance. There are so many variables in each race, from weather conditions to turbulence to random waves, you can't let your concentration lapse for even a second.

Tuned up

There are a couple of new additions to the *Wave Race 64* controls, in the form of a turbo boost and an analogue leaning function on the shoulder triggers. We're not too sure about the turbo, having got some of our best lap times by ignoring it completely (it makes the power meter go back to zero and reduces the bike's normal top speed), but the ability to lean into corners is useful.

Far more stunts are included – all of the original ones plus a load of goofy extras accessed by tricky *1080° Snowboarding*-style joystick movements and button combos – and the stunt mode is the only place you'll ever really need to use them.

Some of the seven courses are inspired by the originals, including a near-identical version of Southern Beach, complete with shipwreck and receding tide. It might sound like a tiny selection compared to most racing games, but there are different routes through them depending on which difficulty level you choose, and the weather conditions can change them almost beyond recognition. Racing a course in fair weather gives you the default conditions, while racing in a storm means rain, darkness and massive waves. Plus there's a spooky mist that obscures your view of the early laps on certain levels.

Soapbox time

For as long as the one-player mode lasts, it's almost a perfect racing game – it always was, which is why the US-based development team wisely chose not to mess around with it in any kind of fundamental way. That's not to say there aren't one or two things we wish

NEW FEATURES

At first glance there isn't a huge amount of new stuff in *Blue Storm*. Same at second glance too.

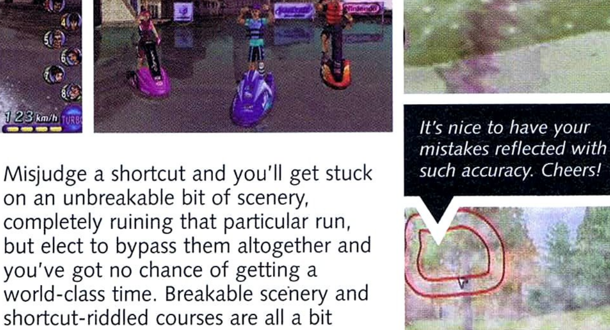
REPLAYS *Races are always followed by full replays, and you can switch between the four available camera views with the C-stick.*

SPRAY *A great visual effect that can affect your view. As the jetski ploughs through the waves, water splashes up on the camera 'lens'.*

SHORTCUTS *Many are hidden behind parts of the scenery, while others are in plain view and offer a quicker but more challenging route.*

SPLASHDOWN *A few bits of scenery play a bigger part in the game, falling into the water at preset points and creating massive tidal waves.*

Dolphins and other wildlife populate most of the courses.



It's nice to have your mistakes reflected with such accuracy. Cheers!

Splashdown! The submarine trick is the easiest way to earn a turbo point.



they hadn't touched, though. The announcers (a different one for each of the eight riders) are very irritating. Miss a buoy and they'll explain the rules of the game in a very patronising manner, even if you're in first place on the last race of Expert mode. And they pronounce 'buoy' as 'boo-ee', which is just about the most annoying thing anyone can say in an American accent. The volume control is tucked away in the options menu.

Our second niggle is with some of the course design. It's good, but there was no need to include so many shortcuts that can only be found by blasting through selected parts of the scenery. It spoils the purity of the races. Misjudge a shortcut and you'll get stuck on an unbreakable bit of scenery, completely ruining that particular run, but elect to bypass them altogether and you've got no chance of getting a world-class time. Breakable scenery and shortcut-riddled courses are all a bit *SSX*, and don't fit in with the way *Wave Race* should do things.

Nit-picking aside, *Wave Race* is arguably the best racer on any console right now. It might be just a sequel, but its forefather stood head and shoulders above the rest of its genre for four years and a complete console generation. Don't bet against *Blue Storm* repeating the feat.

MARTIN KITTS

WAVE RACE BLUE STORM



- We haven't grown tired of marvelling at the water effects.
- Responsive handling.
- Tight racing.



- Distinctly unfair computer AI.
- Difficult to recover from crashes.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Wave Race 64
Nintendo
NGC/2 90%
Blue Storm makes it look rough, but the original water racer is still fun.





9 VISUALS
Fantastically chaotic water effects, and convincing animation from the jetski riders.



8 SOUNDS
The commentators need to be turned off pretty quickly but the music and SFX are nice.



9 MASTERY
A handful of modes and the appeal of returning to admire the splendour of the graphics.



8 LIFESPAN
Similar games on other consoles have never looked or played as good as this.

VERDICT
A worthy successor. We'd guess *Blue Storm* will remain impressive even a couple of years from now.



The most exciting bit of the moguls. Looks brilliant, eh?

The snowboarding: Tony Hawk's for three-year-olds.

The Beatmania-style figure skating is fun – despite truly offensive music.

Konami abandon real-life pretensions – two bobsleighs on the same track.

The ski-jump: as exciting as watching it on the telly.

ESPN INTERNATIONAL WINTER SPORTS 2002

As cold as ice – prepared to sacrifice gameplay.

How we cheered when the Scots held aloft their hard-earned Curling gold medals at Salt Lake City. Can Konami capitalise on our current interest in all things Winter Olympics? Can they jiggery.

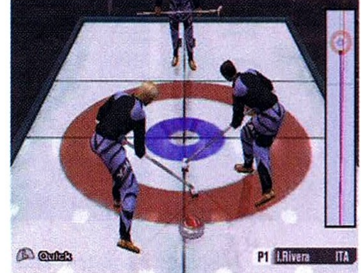
Nice timing. *ESPN International Winter Sports* arrives a full three months after the fizzling out of the final firework at the closing ceremony of the Winter Olympics. That's partly the fault of Gamecube's May release date – so why did Konami bother? *ISS* is a good enough launch present, thanks very much.

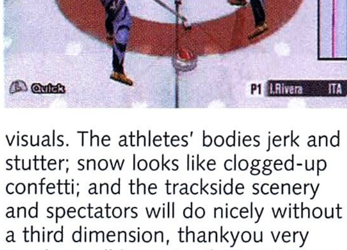
As it is, we're stuck with this. Not just the worst Olympics tie-in in living memory; not only the least-interesting sports title on GC; but one of the worst games we've *ever played*. The last time we felt this suicidal about a game was… four years ago, when Konami vomited up *Nagano Winter Olympics* for N64.

The ten events are short, self-contained, no-frills sub-games that suck every drop of excitement from the sports they're based on. Pulling off stunts on the Half-Pipe might sound like fun – but not when it involves stabbing buttons to match prompts, Simon Says-style. Hopping over snow hills at speed in the Moguls is an enticing prospect – until you're told you'll simply be tapping L and R until your fingers fall off.

Everyone has a 'favourite' event, one that they can just about endure. Tim's is the Downhill Slalom, while others prefer the Figure Skating and its *Parappa the Rapper*-style button-slapping. But that still leaves nine that make staring into the middle distance exhilarating by comparison.

The whole uninspiring package is rounded off with some appalling





visuals. The athletes' bodies jerk and stutter; snow looks like clogged-up confetti; and the trackside scenery and spectators will do nicely without a third dimension, thankyou very much. In all honesty, the N64's two-year-old *International Track and Field* looked better than this.

So, this is one place your hastily-saved Gamecube launch pennies should definitely *not* be going, unless you actually enjoy the kind of simmering rage that can only end with you smashing your precious new console into tiny pieces. Next!

MARK GREEN



INFO BURST

ESPN INTERNATIONAL WINTER SPORTS 2002

DEVELOPER:	Konami
PUBLISHER:	Konami
PLAYERS:	1-2
MEM CARD PAGES:	3
RUMBLE FUNCTION:	Yes
GBA LINK-UP:	No
NUMBER OF DISCS:	1
ONLINE PLAY:	No

WHEN'S IT OUT?



Now | 3rd May | Now

COST: £40

ESPN INTERNATIONAL WINTER SPORTS 2002



- The slalom skiing and figure skating might 'float your boat'.
- Fun with mates. For seven minutes.



- Ugly as sin.
- Simplistic as hell.
- Crucifyingly dull.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

SSX Tricky
EA
NGC/65 88%
Ker-razy stunts and secret-stuffed courses. Nice.





5 VISUALS

The visuals are crisp, admittedly. But they're also simplistic, jerky and laughably-animated.



3 SOUNDS

Nicely summed up by the characters opening their mouths and *no speech coming out.*



4 MASTERY

A dusted-off version of the four-year-old *Nagano Winter Olympics*. No, no, NO!

2 LIFESPAN

Two minutes of hilarity, followed by a feeling of deep despair in the pit of your stomach.

VERDICT

Another selection box of fun-free wintry sporting tedium from Konami. Here's to *Winter Olympics 2006*, eh?

37





The ultimate Game Boy Advance accessory



Mario Sunshine

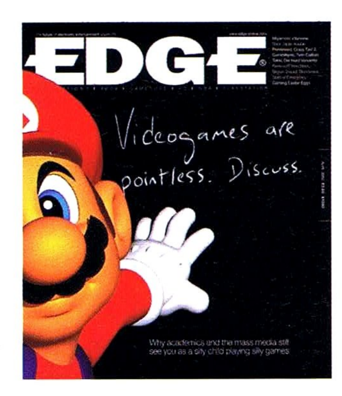


Metroid Prime

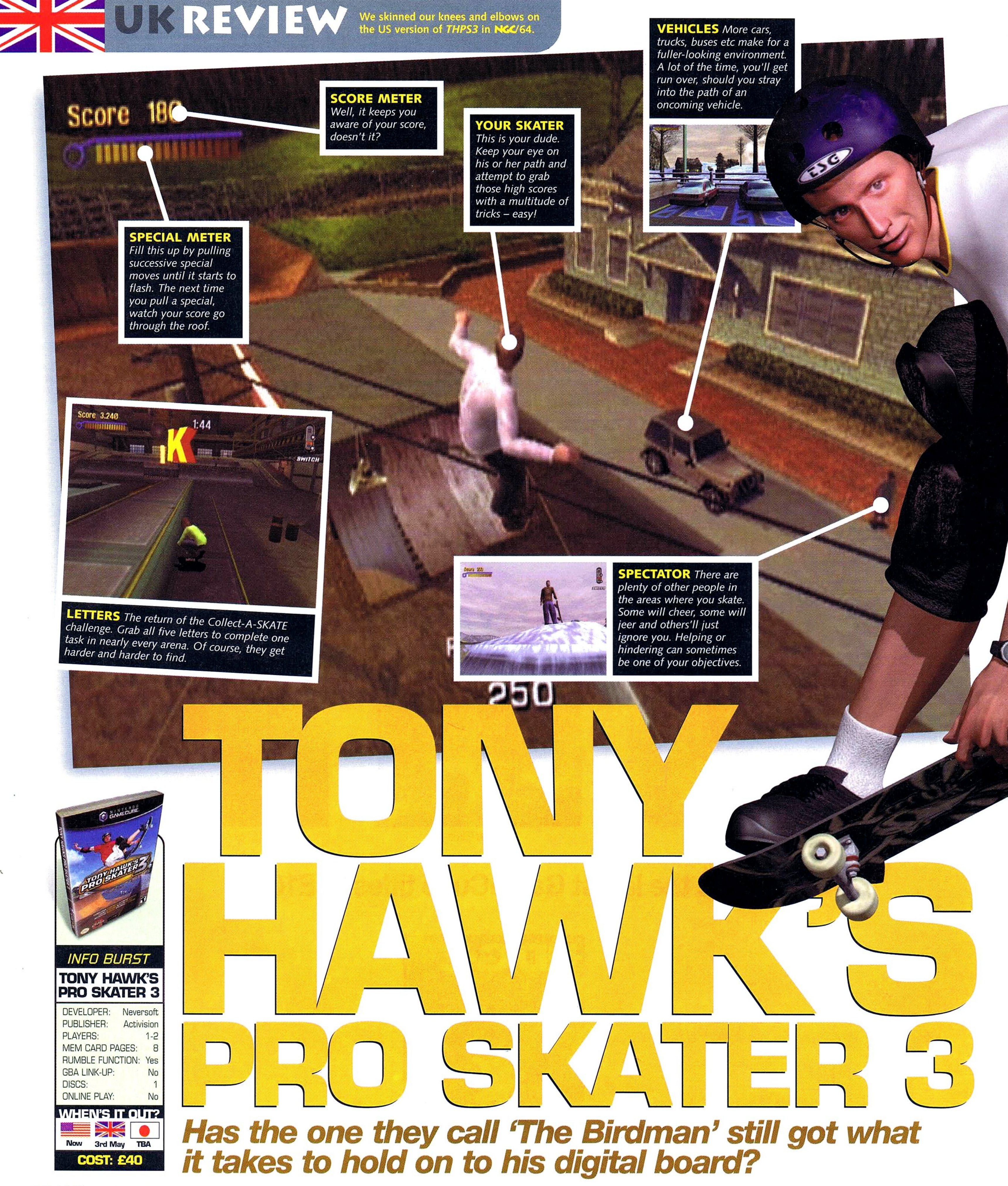


StarFox Adventures

See the latest GameCube titles in E109



On sale now



SCORE METER Well, it keeps you aware of your score, doesn't it?

YOUR SKATER This is your dude. Keep your eye on his or her path and attempt to grab those high scores with a multitude of tricks – easy!

VEHICLES More cars, trucks, buses etc make for a fuller-looking environment. A lot of the time, you'll get run over, should you stray into the path of an oncoming vehicle.

SPECIAL METER Fill this up by pulling successive special moves until it starts to flash. The next time you pull a special, watch your score go through the roof.

LETTERS The return of the Collect-A-SKATE challenge. Grab all five letters to complete one task in nearly every arena. Of course, they get harder and harder to find.

SPECTATOR There are plenty of other people in the areas where you skate. Some will cheer, some will jeer and others'll just ignore you. Helping or hindering can sometimes be one of your objectives.

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

Has the one they call 'The Birdman' still got what it takes to hold on to his digital board?

INFO BURST

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3

DEVELOPER:	Neversoft
PUBLISHER:	Activision
PLAYERS:	1-2
MEM CARD PAGES:	8
RUMBLE FUNCTION:	Yes
GBA LINK-UP:	No
DISCS:	1
ONLINE PLAY:	No

WHEN'S IT OUT?

US	UK	Japan
Now	3rd May	TBA

COST: £40

That's your claret there. Miraculously, the skaters seem able to withstand endless punishment.

The Foundry level. Keep away from the molten metal, or it's frizzle-fry.

The scenic quality of TH3 can't be overstated. Get yourself airborne.

It's a welcome relief when one of your old friends makes it to the next generation of consoles. So we were understandably overjoyed when we heard Tony Hawk's 3 was destined for Gamecube. And it's that familiarity that left us feeling that this could be the Hawkster's finest hour. Of course, we were justifiably smug about ol' Tone's Cubic debut, as we'd sneaked a look at the US version a few issues back. But we can tell you the magic's still as potent as ever. Well, almost.

Let's start by stating the obvious: *Tony Hawk's 3* looks a damn sight finer than its N64 precursor. But you'd expect that. The animation alone is a pulling point, as the skaters are replete with lifelike motion. Each is beautifully brought to life and augmented further by a frankly fantastic graphics engine. Everything is lovingly drawn and superbly detailed; there's no clipping or judder and the sense of scale seems to go on forever – check out Rio or Canada to see what we mean. Never has a skate park looked so real, especially as there are loads more environmental details, such as cars, spectators, greenery, and so on. And at roughly three times the size of levels in the previous games, you're going to need a fairly succinct memory if you want to fathom ways to get all the best trick points.

But it's not just the presentation that's been upgraded – Neversoft's sense of improvement has spilled over into the game, as there's been a few adjustments to the way you play. Firstly, the cash factor is gone. Instead, you're met by a wider band of objectives in order to progress to the following level during Career Mode. Examples? Impressing parkside skaters, delivering plane tickets, or knocking the foreman into a pool of water. Old tasks also make a return, such as collecting the letters of the word 'SKATE' and retrieving the secret tape. Each level has nine such objectives, all different, and each demands a higher number to be

SECRET STASH

One of the sweetest things about *Tony Hawks 3* is the raft of unlockables. Apart from the levels, you can bust open a bunch of options, including Giant and Tiny modes, Moon Physics, Slowmo and First-Person Perspective (tough stuff). But the best inclusion is the special characters. Check our list for some really surprising peeps.



Must've been some fancy licensing going on to secure him. Complete with Twin Light Saber™ accessory.



Wolverine, adamantium claws and all! Not sure how yellow spandex will protect him from a bail, though.



Ollie the Magic Bum. Swears and shouts random abuse at you once you select him.



Demoness. A strange and certainly evil apparition. Quite what her origins are remains a mystery.



DAT'S GOTTA HOIT!

Continuing our theme of watching/enjoying people get hurt, it's no surprise that the main game contains some bone-crunching moments, especially those involving your skater returning to Earth at high velocity. And the blood is just revolting. It's anyone's guess why the protagonists aren't wearing pads and lids. Remember kids – safety first.

PLAYING GOD

If there's one distraction that'll keep you ocuppied for hours, it's the Create-A-Skater mode.



Here's our geezer in all his nearly-naked glory, ready to be moulded into a boarding legend. Wonder who he works for?

Okay, let's fiddle with his appearance. Perhaps he spends too much time playing Tony Hawk's 3. A pallid, waxen skin beckons…



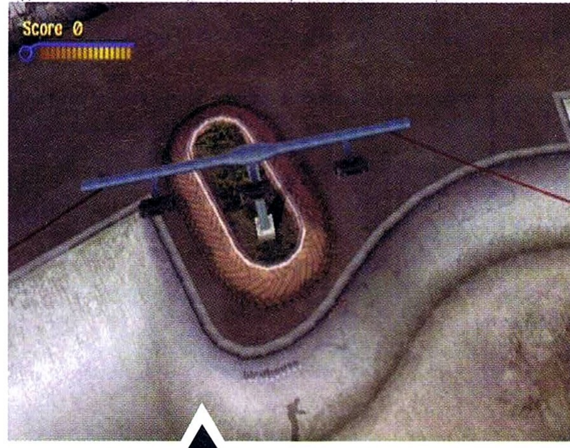
Time to slap some sturdy threads on him. Hmm – this horrible sleeveless tank-top (with pentagram) should do the job just right.



The Switch icon on the top right lets you know your dominant foot orientation.

When you're at this sort of altitude, it's hard to know how or where you'll land.





The first-person perspective is dynamic and exciting, but also almost useless.

SOUNDS OF THE SUBURBS

TH3 is kitted out in one of the gaming world's best soundtracks – although it won't be to everyone's taste, the list is as rough as the ground you skate over. Check out this list of names: The Ramones; Red Hot Chilli Peppers; Henry Rollins Band; Alien Ant Farm; House of Pain; KRS-One, not to mention the mighty Motorhead, who contribute their anthemic Ace of Spades for the opening movie. Grinding to such raucous riffs and old-skool hip-hop adds a real edge to the experience – we daren't think how lame it would've been with generic hard house for musical accompaniment. See and, indeed, hear for yourself.







completed before you're able to unlock the next area.

But what does it play like? For the most part, as grandly as its earlier outings. Once again, the key to skating stardom is tricks and stunts. With a greater number than ever, plus a new balance meter and tweaked reverts and manuals, fans of the series will find themselves in heaven. There's just about everything you'd ever need to spend hours racking up staggering scores – the controls (while not quite as intuitive as they should be) are relatively easy to master, most tricks being executable with a single button and direction press. The Special Meter allows you to rack up super-high scores once it's full and the C-stick is great for setting the virtual eye where you need it. But there's more: visit the Skate Shop and you'll bear witness to the cornucopic options – there's nothing you can't fiddle with, including the new-and-improved Skate Park Editor and the Create-A-Skater menu. Don't like your guy's shades? They're gone. Different board? No problemo!

Control freaks

However, *Tony Hawk's 3* isn't perfect. There are a couple of niggles in the control department, such as having to hold back on the stick to stand still, or the laborious turing circle of most skaters. But these are minor and hardly worth mentioning. What is a concern, however, is the way the game stonewalls people who are new to the genre. Take, for example, the tutorial: narrated by Tony Hawk himself, it's no-nonsense and bitesize. But after 12-or-so lessons and numerous commands, newbies are going to be supremely confused. Without hours of training (an awfully dull experience) it requires a Herculean feat of memory to even remember whether it's X and Up, or just Y at the lip of the ramp, resulting in a process of continuously falling on your rear, which is a discouraging experience. And it's

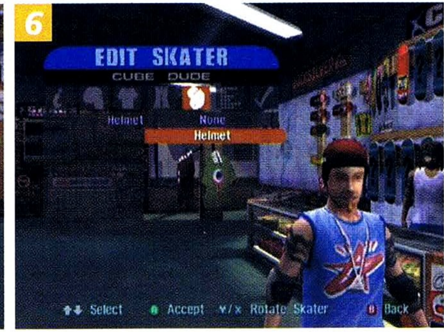
From a basic customisable form, you can build up your perfect dude before hitting the ramps. Follow us through…



Time to get our fella appropriately inked-up. Some manly tribal tattoos for each bicep should suit him very nicely.



Next, we somehow felt the need to give him a pair of baggy snow 'pants', as our Yankee friends would refer to them.



Last, but not least, it's time for a helmet and elbow pads. Don't want him busting his melon open on the concrete, do we? Job done.

Keep the balance meter central to hold onto this nose stall. The points rack up as you do.

There's plenty of opportunity to see the world from strange and different angles.

not helped by the dreadfully banal Americanisms of the skaters. Field-specific language is one thing, but those unfamiliar with Ollies, Melons and Wallies are likely to feel a tad alienated, not to mention begging for someone to speak in English. Learning a convoluted and desperately 'cool' lingo is no aid to the learning process.

But our guess is that ninety-five per cent of the people playing this will be veterans – sales alone are testament to the overall quality of the series. Once any initial barriers are passed, it's rock-solid, playable, beautiful and plethoric to the nines, even if it's questionable how long the appeal of the 'ollie-trick-ollie' premise will last – depth and breadth certainly aren't the game's strongest elements, something you discover the longer you spend in *Hawk 3*'s company (hence the drop in score). That said, attaining that elusive high score is still as relentlessly enjoyable today as it was when, say, *Space Invaders* appeared in arcades just over twenty years ago and, ultimately, it's all you need – a hefty slice of gameplay that'll keep you coming back. *Tony Hawk's 3* has that in spades.

NEIL RANDALL

A WORLD OF PAIN

One of the secrets deep within Tony Hawk's 3 is the collections of short movies, most of which are interviews, intros and the like. However, one such selection, 'Pro Bails', is a well-funny montage of fools and their boards parting company in the most unceremonious of ways. So sit back and enjoy, as teeth meet tarmac. Excellent.

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3



- Expansive arenas loaded with detail.
- Great playability and endless tricks to pull.
- Plenty to customise and unlock.



- Initially daunting and inaccessible.
- Trite language.
- Couple of very minor control flaws.

IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2
Activision
NGC/62, 90%
Tony's late N64 incarnation.





Top-drawer. Smooth, detailed, judder-free and with some excellent track-side motifs.



Apt and energetic soundtrack and a fine selection of environmental FX.



GC seems to take it in its stride – not the hardest work it's ever had to deal with.



Months and months. In fact, you could happily play this all year. And many will.

VERDICT

A fine sequel. Stacks to do and see, but often a selfish game that doesn't like newcomers.



TIME *Keep an eye on this. If it runs out it's game over. Try and move fares around as quickly as possible to increase your game time.*

ARROW *Follow this as if your life depended on it. The closer you are to your destination, the redder it gets.*

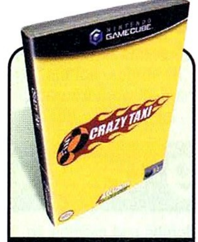
FARE METER *Indicates how much cash you've racked up so far – and how much the current customer is going to give you.*

CUSTOMERS *The colour glowing around them indicates how far you'll need to take them once they've hopped into the back. The longer the fare, the bigger the cash haul.*

DESTINATION *This shows you where you need to be headed. Not that you need it – the giant glowing arrow above you is a bit of a giveaway, to be honest.*

YOUR CAR *Depends on which cabbie you select. Each driver's vehicle has different strengths and weaknesses that need to be taken into account when hooning about the city.*

GEARBOX *Nice and easy as there's only forward and reverse to think about – but through some cunningly timed switches between the two, you execute some handy manoeuvres.*



INFO BURST

CRAZY TAXI

DEVELOPER:	Acclaim
PUBLISHER:	Sega
PLAYERS:	1
MEMORY CARD SIZE:	2
RUMBLE FUNCTION:	Yes
GBA LINK-UP:	No
DISCS:	1
ONLINE PLAY:	No

WHEN'S IT OUT?

US	UK	Japan
Now	3rd May	Now

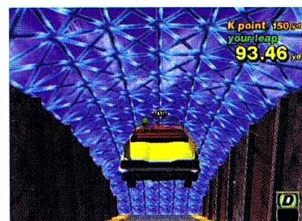
COST: £40



CRAZY TAXI

Fare play! Sega's barmy driver delivers...

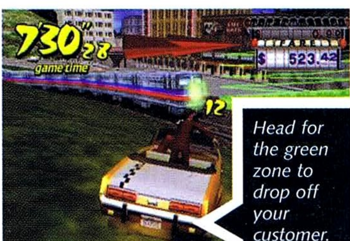
MAD SKILLS


In order to get the most of out of *Crazy Taxi*, there are a number of techniques you'll need to master. Through judicious use of the brake and accelerator pedals and the reverse gear, you can pull off some sweet manoeuvres, such as the Crazy Dash – which gives you a speed boost – and the Crazy Drift, which allows you to power-slide around corners. Both of these skills and more can be mastered in the Crazy Box – a selection of sub-games that test your specific skills, all of which are highly entertaining in their own right. Spending time with these is a must if you want to rack up huge fares in the main game.

The Crazy Drift allows you to swing around tight corners much faster.







Head for the green zone to drop off your customer.

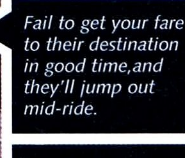
Jump high enough and you can see all that nasty pop-up. Great.

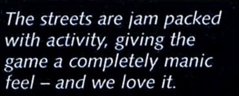




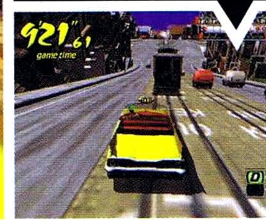
Fail to get your fare to their destination in good time,and they'll jump out mid-ride.

You can drive pretty much anywhere you want – even through shopping malls! That really is crazy!





The streets are jam packed with activity, giving the game a completely manic feel – and we love it.




If there's one thing that Sega are renowned for, it's their ability to create the finest quick-fix gaming known to man – a skill that's come from over 20 years of hardcore arcade experience. So it's with great pleasure that we welcome both Sega and one of their finest arcade outings to Gamecube...

The idea is simple enough. Choose from two different cities, select a cabbie from the choice of four characters and take to the streets to earn as much dough as the time limit will allow. In order to get the most cash, you'll need to pick up customers from the side of the road and drive them to their chosen destination as fast as possible. The more successful you are, the more time bonuses you get and ultimately, the higher your potential to earn more money.

In order to make things a little easier there's a massive arrow above your car which lets you know which way you should be going, and all the fares are colour-coded to let you know roughly how far you'll have to travel once they've hopped into the cab.

Naturally, this is no straightforward cabbie sim. The fastest route between two points is in a straight line, as they say – and if that means tearing through parkland, beaches and shopping malls, so be it.

Crazy by name, crazy by nature

It's certainly deserving of the name. *Crazy Taxi* does a remarkable job of showing you what it would be like to get into a car and run riot on the streets with blatant disregard for road safety. Pedestrians yell at you as you try to force your bumper down their throats, oncoming traffic honks wildly as you slalom down the wrong side of the motorway, and, strangely, your fare jeers with delight as you threaten to send them flying through your windscreen with your erratic driving. No doubt about it, on your first play *Crazy Taxi* is a fantastic experience that proves to be a very satisfying assault on the senses.

The visuals, although not exactly ground-breaking (this is a four-year-old game, remember) are suitably colourful and the environments are nice and solid throughout, but it's the level of activity going on that really impresses at first. The streets are crowded with civilians, cars, lorries and buses fill the roads, and all manner of destructible roadside objects are carelessly strewn around for you to smash into – creating a magnificent feeling of total mayhem.

Go the distance

Inevitably though, games developed for the arcade rarely translate well to consoles. *Crazy Taxi* may be an exception to the rule to some extent, but the fact remains that there are only so many times you can drive the same customers to the same destinations before things start to get a little dull. In all fairness, there's the Crazy Box mode to keep you going a bit longer, and there are two large cities to explore, but being designed for the arcade, *Crazy Taxi* just doesn't have much longevity. So, despite its undoubted quality, after a few weeks of play, you'll only take *Crazy Taxi* out for ten-minute bursts thereafter – no matter how much fun it is.

GERAINT EVANS





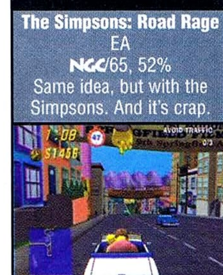
- Total mayhem and brilliant fun.
- Instantly accessible.
- A perfect fix for high-score junkies.



- Shallow gameplay.
- Doesn't take long to get repetitive.
- And doesn't take long to see everything, either.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

The Simpsons: Road Rage
EA
NGC/65, 52%
Same idea, but with the Simpsons. And it's crap.





7 VISUALS

The best-looking version of *Crazy Taxi* yet – but the Gamecube is capable of much better.



7 SOUNDS

Amusing speech samples struggling through angry Offspring tracks.



7 MASTERY

Big cities boasting plenty of activity, but technically, it could have been so much more.



8 LIFESPAN

You'll still bring it out for a ten-minute blast months down the line – but no more.

VERDICT

It's knocking on a bit, but if you never played it on Dreamcast you should consider giving it a go.



70



It's a jungle out there – and it's a downright gorgeous one to boot.



We're positive Gamecube is capable of more polygons than this.



Based on the Rayman 2 engine, this bit. It's awful.

Vines are an integral part of stringing leaps and slides together.



Remember Tarzan bungee-jumping in the movie? No? Because he didn't.

TARZAN FREERIDE

Just in time for the movie's 1999 release.

Another Disney-based game, another foetid 2D platforming snorefest, yes? No! Ubi Soft in above-average, fast-paced, three-dimensional surf-'em-up shocker...

Like the dismembered head of Walt himself, Disney games seem to have been frozen in time for the last ten years. The Mickey Mouse outfit struck gold with the neat 2D platformer *Aladdin* in 1992, and have cheerfully been banging out the same formula – with Donald Duck or Pocahontas or whoever – ever since.

Until now, that is, because – hallelujah! – Disney have finally discovered dimension number three. *Tarzan Freeride* has plenty in common with its imagination-free 2D ancestors, as the basic idea is to scamper forward on a fixed path until the end of each level, but the fancy 3D visuals – coupled with an idea or two borrowed from *Tony Hawk's* and friends – make for a surprisingly entertaining experience.

Extending an idea from the animated movie, Mr T spends much of *Tarzan Freeride* 'surfing' into the screen along tree trunks that handily always point downwards. It's good fun. When it gets into its stride, you can link log-sliding with vine-swinging, snake-dodging and hippo-bouncing, in a manner not dissimilar to the stringing together of grinds and stunts in *Tony Hawk's*.

As Tarzan sprints, swings and bounces forward along the mostly pre-determined route, you'll feel your fingers twitching and your eyes darting around the screen as you work to avoid a humiliating tumble to the jungle floor. Linking moves to reach a floating banana or stranded baby monkey might not offer *SSX Tricky* levels of satisfaction, but it sure beats the soul-sappingly tedious search for hidden items in *Tarzan 64*.

To give that game its due, though, it did recreate the jungle in eye-popping detail – and *Tarzan Freeride* continues the tradition, with lush greenery at every turn. The animation might be lacking (wait until you see the snakes' 'spaghetti slide' move), and *Wave Race* makes the primitive surfing sections look very silly. But the *game* is decent enough – limited, yes, but smart all the same. Oh, and you can summon Tarzan's trademark yodel with a simple tap of the Y button. Magic.

MARK GREEN

INFO BURST

TARZAN FREERIDE

DEVELOPER:	Ubi Soft
PUBLISHER:	Ubi Soft
PLAYERS:	1
MEM CARD PAGES	8
RUMBLE FUNCTION:	Yes
GBA LINK-UP:	No
NUMBER OF DISCS:	1
ONLINE PLAY:	No

WHEN'S IT OUT?

US	UK	Japan
Now	3rd May	TBA

COST: £40

TARZAN FREERIDE



- Fancy-schmancy three-dimensional graphics system.
- A very satisfying sense of speed.



- Will last you a week.
- Repetitive.
- The movie's getting on a bit.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Tony Hawk's 3
Activision
NGC/67 93%
Near-flawless plank-riding from grampa Hawk.





7 VISUALS

Nothing that spectacular, but it is sharp and slick. The forest itself is a right looker.



7 SOUNDS

The incidental music is pretty forgettable, but you've just gotta love that yodel.



5 MASTERY

Quick, but we doubt the N64 would have struggled with this 3D tree-surfing malarkey.



6 LIFESPAN

Plenty of play in there for the young 'uns – but not quite so much for grown-ups.

VERDICT

Disney's usual fixed-path platforming, but speeded up and dusted down for the 3D generation. Not at all bad.



59

The goons in Batman are pretty samey – with specific cloned grunts for every themed level.



The tutorial in the Batcave helps you get to grips with Batman's simple controls.



The first level helps to set the scene beautifully. The credits even roll as you go.

Infiltrating the stronghold of Mr Freeze – the boss encounter is pretty smart.

BATMAN VENGEANCE

Caped Crusader or complete Joker?

Ubi Soft aren't renowned for stellar licence conversions – one look at Tarzan Freeride *and you'll see why.* Batman Vengeance *doesn't exactly rectify matters, but at least it makes an effort.*

For once we have a *Batman* game that actually resembles what it's trying to imitate – in this case Batman: The Animated Series and Mask of the Phantasm. To give credit where it's due, Ubi Soft have done an excellent job.

First off, thanks to Nintendo's switch from the cartridge format, we can finally have decent, voice-acted cut-scenes, which helps the atmosphere in *Vengeance* no end. Okay, so cut-scenes aren't everything, but they certainly help in this case, primarily because the in-game visuals aren't *that* different from the cinematics, which keeps the transition between levels nice and smooth. All the environments and character models are in keeping with the animated series' 1920s gangster-chic styling, the textures are all very basic and spartan, while the lighting consistently creates that moody ambience we've come to know and love from the cartoons. Even Batman's pigeon-chested gait is in place, and for once his cape is beautifully animated, with gorgeous silky ripples fanning out as he leaps about like a mincing beefcake.

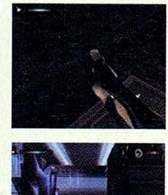
Bat action

But when it comes down to actually *playing* the thing, there's nothing here you won't have seen a million times over. It's a 3D world interspersed with identical goons, health and weapon pick-ups, chasms to leap over, locked doors to find keys for, and simple puzzles to solve. But despite the so-so gameplay, it's surprisingly good fun. There are some niggling camera faults and the enemies aren't exactly the most challenging in the world, but once you start playing, you'll still be compelled to see it through to the end – which, we suppose, is what matters at the end of the day.

This is competent, if uninspired stuff that will no doubt please Bat-fans. But if you couldn't care less about the Dark Knight, you might want to hang on until Activision's ace-looking *Spider-Man: The Movie* makes its appearance in just one month's time.

GERAINT EVANS

BAT-GADGETS



What Batman game would be complete without a tasty selection of Bat-gadgetry to help you in your quest? Thankfully, Vengeance doesn't disappoint in the slightest, with electro-charged Batarangs, the Bat-Grappler and the chance to hare about in the Batwing and Batmobile.

INFO BURST

BATMAN VENGEANCE

DEVELOPER:	Ubi Soft
PUBLISHER:	Ubi Soft
PLAYERS:	1
MEM CARD PAGES	2
RUMBLE FUNCTION:	Yes
GBA LINK-UP:	No
NUMBER OF DISCS:	1
ONLINE PLAY:	No

WHEN'S IT OUT?

US	UK	Japan
Now	3rd May	Now

COST: £40





- Atmospheric.
- True to the TV series.
- Some smart cut-scenes and bosses.

−

- Painfully unoriginal.
- Some annoying camera faults.
- Gets repetitive.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Tarzan Freeride
NGC/67, 59%
Another toon-licence from Ubi Soft that's strictly for the younger player.





VISUALS

Fairly simplistic in a stylised kind of way, but they do the job perfectly.



SOUNDS

Sweet effects, appropriately moody music, and full speech.



Hardly awe-inspiring. The GC can do much better that this.



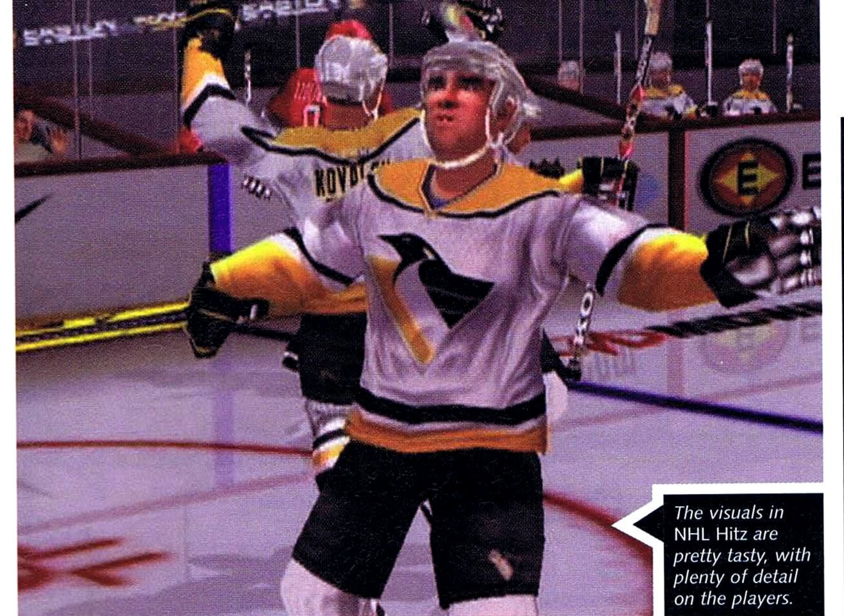
LIFESPAN

Plenty of levels to work through, and you won't mind playing it again.

VERDICT

An adventure that, although failing to offer anything new, is still pretty good fun to play.

70

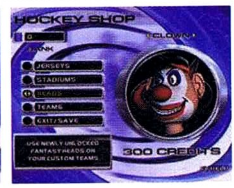


The visuals in NHL Hitz are pretty tasty, with plenty of detail on the players.

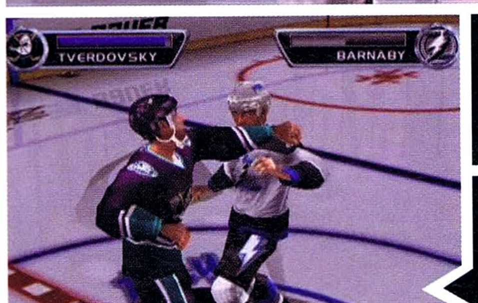
IT'S ALIVE!

One of the best features of Hitz is the ability to create and fully customise your own team from scratch in the franchise mode. There are plenty of tinkerable options at your disposal, too – allowing you to create a suitably monstrous threesome to intimidate the opposition with. Best of all, the more matches you play and win, the more points you get to beef up individual player stats. Of all the modes in the game, this is far and away the most engrossing for single players.







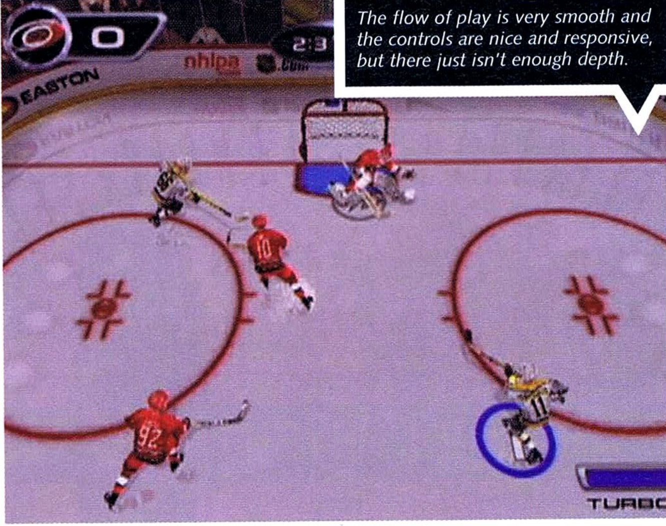


To get the most out of NHL Hitz you'll need to get some mates round for some four-player antics.

Amusing as the fights are to start with, you'll soon tire of them as they tend to break up the action.







The flow of play is very smooth and the controls are nice and responsive, but there just isn't enough depth.

NHL HITZ

Nice and freezy does it every time.

Let's face it, American football is just rugby with a load of overpaid wusses in armour, while baseball is just rounders without the thrill of watching girls in PE skirts. Ice hockey, on the other hand...

There's something inherently amusing about taking a bunch of toothless idiots, kitting them up in jumbo-sized pads, arming them with sticks and getting them to charge around on ice after a chunk of rubber – and for the most part, *NHL Hitz* (despite having a Z on the end) emulates this very well.

If you're expecting a realistic hockey sim, though, you can forget it. *Hitz* is essentially a 'raw' version of the game, stripped bare and exaggerated for the purpose of making things more fun (a bit like *NBA Jam* was to basketball). To start with, matches are now three-a-side, with an emphasis on over-the-top play complete with fights, eye-watering body-checks and the ability to smash players through the guard glass with a well-placed charge. The icing on the arcade-cake comes in the form of the On-Fire mode whereby, after a period of impressive play, players catch fire, improving their power and making them virtually unstoppable.

As you can imagine, it makes for some very entertaining play – and it's relatively good fun to start with. Unfortunately, it becomes pretty short-lived when you begin to realise how shallow the game is. Maybe it's just the nature of the sport itself, but there seems to be little need for strategy whatsoever. Players simply charge back and forth trying to get into a shooting position before being battered onto the ice by the opposition. The need for intelligent passing is minimal, with the emphasis on raw power instead, and as a result *Hitz* is sorely lacking in any real depth or longevity.

In its favour, however, the multiplayer proves to be a great laugh, especially if there are four of you going at it. There's also a comprehensive selection of modes, team and player editors, hidden extras and minigames to play. But as we said, this will only hold your interest so long if you're a solo player. Still, it's definitely well worth a rental if you and your mates fancy a laugh for a few hours – other than that it's pretty forgettable.

GERAINT EVANS

INFO BURST

NHL HITZ

DEVELOPER:	Black Box
PUBLISHER:	Midway
PLAYERS:	1-4
MEM CARD PAGES	8
RUMBLE FUNCTION:	Yes
GBA LINK-UP:	No
NUMBER OF DISCS:	1
ONLINE PLAY:	No

WHEN'S IT OUT?

US	UK	Japan
Now	3rd May	TBA

COST: £40

NHL HITZ

+

- Crisp visuals and smooth animation.
- Great for late-night multiplayer action.

–

- Short-lived single-player mode.
- Gameplay can be shallow and messy.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

NBA Courtside 2002
NGC/66, 79%
So far, the best American sports title available for Gamecube.



8 VISUALS

Very tasty, these. Detailed, smooth and well animated.

7 SOUNDS

A selection of rancid nu-metal choons. Good commentary, though.



7 MASTERY

Not really pushing Gamecube too hard, but the action can get very slick indeed.

8 LIFESPAN

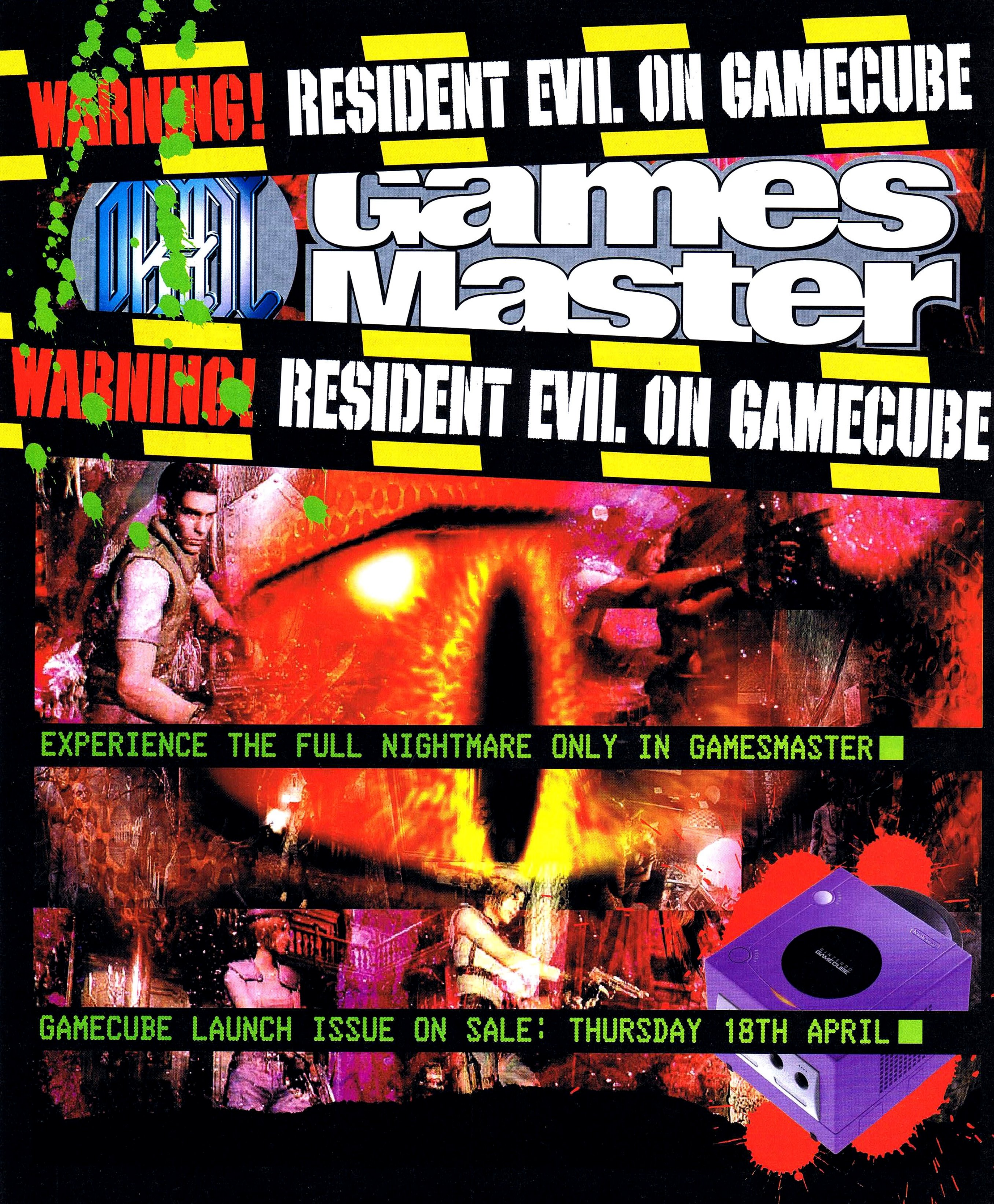
Not too hot in single-player, but the multiplayer will keep this going for ages.

VERDICT

Entertaining arcade madness that proves to be pretty shallow in the long run – unless you have friends to play with.

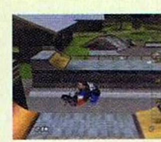


79



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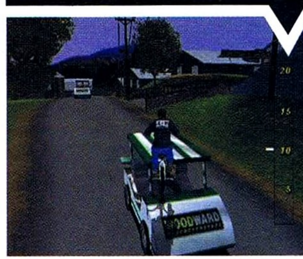


TWO-PLAYER BLUES

A proper two-player split-screen mode would have been nice, but unfortunately there isn't one. Instead, the small selection of multiplayer games requires you to take it in turns to top each other's scores. The only likely reason we can come up with for the lack of simultaneous two-player action is the size of the levels. Maybe bigger isn't necessarily better after all...



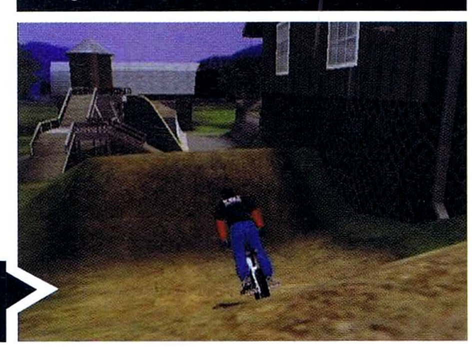
There's a little pop-up in the distance, but it's hardly noticeable.



It may be lacking in the detail department, but it runs smoothly.



The trick system is very comprehensive, but it lacks the tightness of control that's Tony Hawk's speciality.



The arenas are simply massive, with plenty for you to explore.

DAVE MIRRA 2 FREESTYLE BMX

Another extreme port for GC...

Ever since Tony Hawk's, every extreme sports guru and their dog have been digitally rendered and chucked around ramp-laden arenas by combo-hungry gamers. This time it's Mr Mirra's turn...

Fortunately for Dave, this latest rail-riding romp isn't bad. Anyone familiar with this kind of game will know exactly what to expect. Select your character, begin your career and start checking out the trick potential. As you'd expect, everything is in place: the grindable rails and ledges, half-pipes, ramps and funboxes are present and correct, with one added bonus – the levels are simply huge.

Of course, by huge, we mean frickin' *massive*. We thought *Tony Hawk's* sizeable levels were impressive, but in the face of *Dave Mirra* they positively pale in comparison. Unfortunately, such ambitious level design is ultimately its downfall. It isn't instantly accessible – the first hour of play involves you riding round like a clueless idiot trying to figure out where you're supposed to be going and what you should be doing – and because of the scale of the game, everything seems far less focused than *Tony*.

Still, that's not to say it isn't any fun. The more you play the more you begin to memorize the course layout, which means you can spend more time working on what's important – mastering tricks, linking them into combos, and unlocking more of the game. Once again, *Dave Mirra* bites off a little more than it can chew in this area. The trick system is comprehensive to say the least, boasting a bewildering array of basic moves that can be linked into an even meatier array of combos. Again, this seems to work against the game in the long run, as the sheer size of the levels and tricks on offer makes playing far less intuitive than we'd have hoped.

There are some presentational issues that hold *DM2* back from quite making the extreme-sports elite. To start with, the textures are a little weak (probably a by-product of the move from the PS2), while the camera mechanics all too often hinder your view and make things frustrating. That, and the lack of a two-player split-screen mode, contrives to keep *Tony Hawk's 3* firmly at the top of the pile.

GERAINT EVANS

INFO BURST

DAVE MIRRA 2 FREESTYLE BMX

DEVELOPER:	Z-Axis
PUBLISHER:	Acclaim
PLAYERS:	1-2
MEM CARD PAGES	4
RUMBLE FUNCTION:	No
GBA LINK-UP:	No
NUMBER OF DISCS:	1
ONLINE PLAY:	No

WHEN'S IT OUT?

US	UK	Japan
Now	3rd May	TBA

COST: £40

DAVE MIRRA 2 FREESTYLE BMX



- Absolutely massive arenas to ride in.
- Loads of tricks and challenges to get your teeth into.



- Visually lacking.
- No multiplayer option.
- Gameplay not as tight as *Tony Hawk's*.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3
NGC/67, 87%
Hands down, the best extreme sports available on Gamecube.





7 VISUALS

Basic textures and a little lacking in detail. Runs smoothly, though.



6 SOUNDS

Some bog-standard effects and samples mixed up with a few decent tunes.



6 MASTERY

It's way too much like the PS2 version for your GC to take it seriously.



7 LIFESPAN

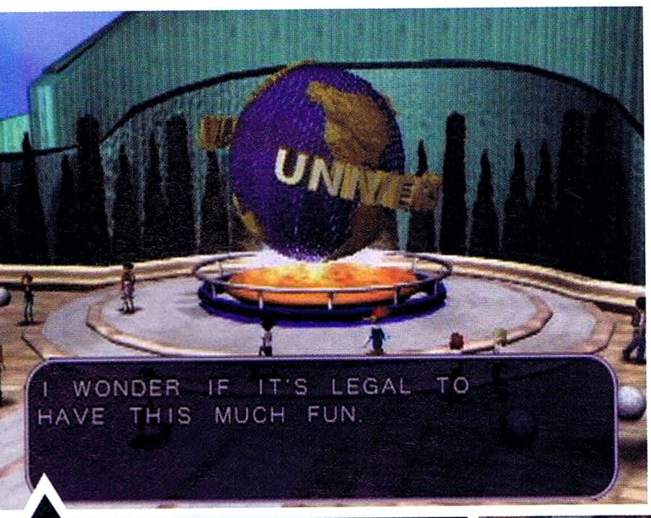
It's very big, we'll give it that, and once you get into it it'll keep you going for ages.

VERDICT

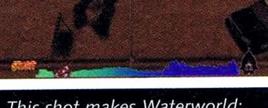
It certainly tries its hardest, and once you've forgiven the failings it's certainly good fun – just not as much as *THPS3*.



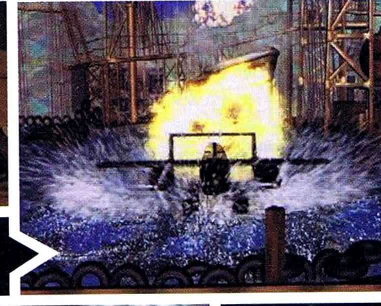
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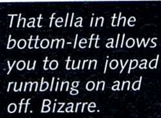


The folk at Kemco seem to have deliberately programmed park attendees to be hilariously sarcastic.



This shot makes Waterworld: The 'Ride' look far more exciting than it actually is.





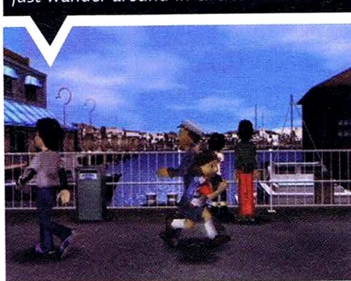


That fella in the bottom-left allows you to turn joypad rumbling on and off. Bizarre.





The punters don't go anywhere – they just wander around in circles forever.



UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

A park where the theme is abject tedium.

Kemco are handing out "VIP tickets to a theme park adventure!", it says here. Sounds exciting? They might as well be offering winter donkey-riding holidays to Skegness.

The hopeless GCSE-level artwork on the *Universal Studios* box – just look at the dinosaur! – should set alarm bells ringing straight away. But even if the packaging had consisted of nothing more than a sheet of soiled toilet paper, it still wouldn't have conveyed the sheer, mind-blowing rubbishness of the game inside.

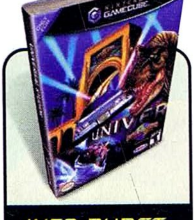
It's a mad idea to start with. If, like us, you can barely afford a passport, let alone a flight to Universal Studios in LA, why depress yourself with a half-arsed 'virtual' tour that simply reminds you how many laughs much richer folk are having at the real thing?

Amazingly, Kemco seem keen to actually *encourage* this kind of misery – in *Universal Studios*, you have to *pick up rubbish* discarded by happy punters before you're allowed a go on the rides. It takes *ages* before your irritating host Woody Woodpecker is satisfied with the amount of crap you've collected – and Kemco really couldn't have made the process of simply walking around any more difficult, thanks to fixed camera views that give you a superb view of your kid as a tiny speck 100 metres off in the distance.

When you finally earn a go on one of *Universal Studio*'s 'rides' (all five of them), it's equivalent to having all those hard-earned empty Coke cans and crisp bags tipped over your head. Whether you're rescuing folk from a blazing building in the Backdraft game, chucking barrels at a plastic shark in 'Jaws', or watching Waterworld's climactic scene from *three different camera angles*, the minigames are dump. And when it's over minutes later, it's back to trudging around scooping up filth.

There's the odd side-quest to 'liven things up', but having to track down some idiot's lost cellphone isn't a world away from trash hunting. And the presence of world's worst cartoon character Woody Woodpecker – complete with a head that, terrifyingly, spins through 360 degrees in order to *watch your every move* – are the icing on the cake. This is – literally – a load of rubbish.

MARK GREEN



INFO BURST

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

DEVELOPER:	Kemco
PUBLISHER:	Kemco
PLAYERS:	1
MEM CARD PAGES	1
RUMBLE FUNCTION:	Yes
GBA LINK-UP:	No
NUMBER OF DISCS:	1
ONLINE PLAY:	No

WHEN'S IT OUT?

US	UK	Japan
Now	3rd May	Now

COST: £40

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

+

- Funny, in an 'I've just wasted 40 pounds' kind of way.

–

- Terrible rides.
- Unambitious visuals.
- Woody Woodpecker.
- You have to *collect rubbish*, for Pete's sake.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

Rocket Robot on Wheels
Ubi Soft
NGC/36, 88%
Underrated little platformer from the people behind Windows 95. Seriously!





3 VISUALS

The backgrounds are static for added detail – but they're still of sub-N64 standard.

2 SOUNDS

A never-ending jingly-jangly tune that will send you mad, plus Woody's screeching voice.



1 MASTERY

We've seen pocket calculators pull off more impressive performances than this.



1 LIFESPAN

Ha, ha.

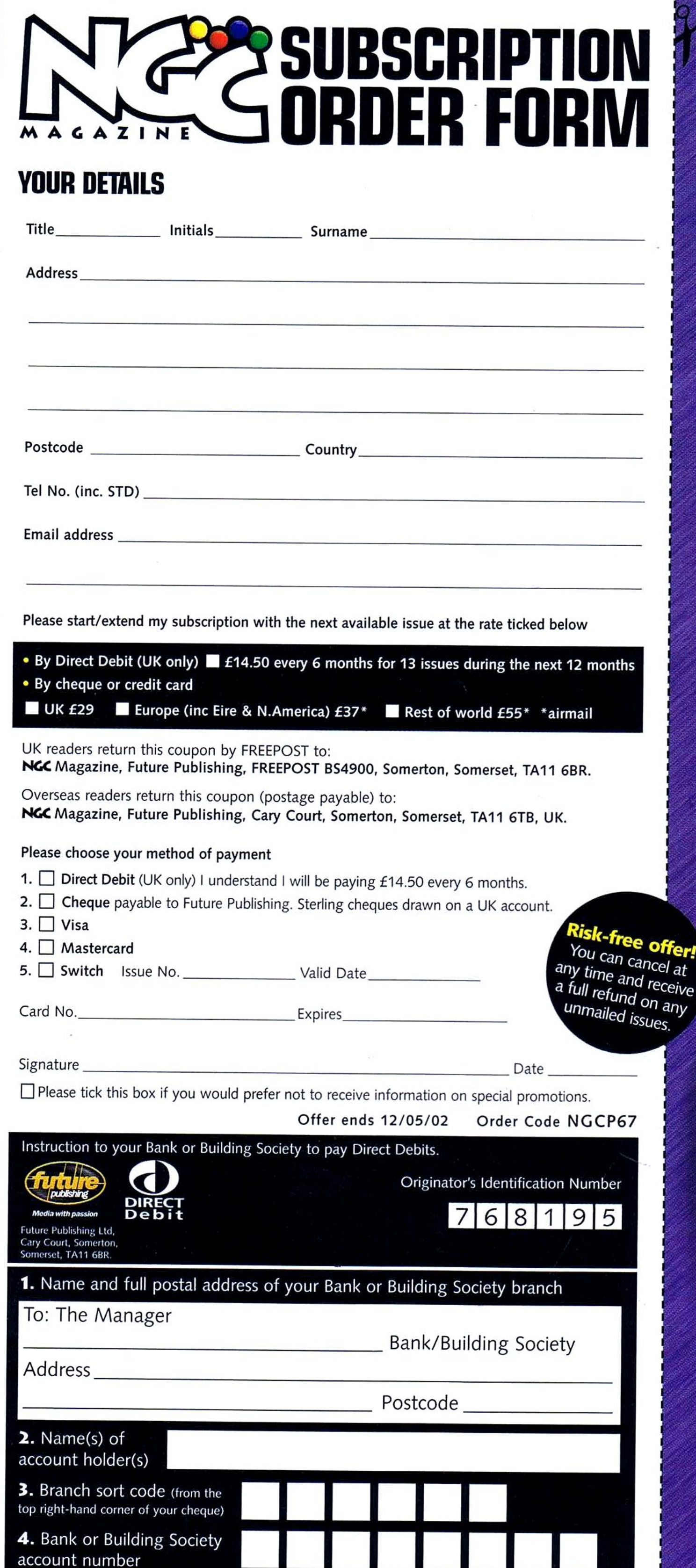
VERDICT

Five minigames duller than a cheese sandwich, plus hour after hour of clearing up after other people's mess. Barely a game.



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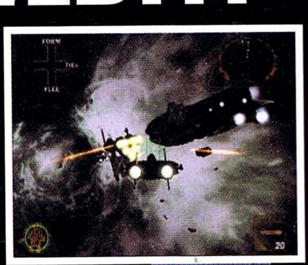
AND THAT'S NOT ALL!

HUGE WORLD EXCLUSIVE

CAN YOU GUESS WHAT IT IS YET? We'll be taking apart one of the most hotly anticipated games of the year in our HUGE preview spectacular!

REVIEWED...


SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE


STAR WARS: ROGUE LEADER


ISS 2


2002 FIFA WORLD CUP



NGC MAGAZINE ISSUE 68

ON SALE MONDAY 13TH MAY

All magazine contents and free gifts subject to change. Tim, and everyone else, really says sorry. Sorry.



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NEXT MONTH... NEW GAMES!

LUIGI'S MANSION



Hey, it ain't *Mario Sunshine*, but *Luigi's Mansion* offers levels of enjoyment on a par with Kylie at the Brits. It also deals itself in with massive scope for challenges. So, here's a couple to get you started: **see how many Gs you can notch up at the end of the game**, and – if that isn't tricky enough for you – **see how long it takes you to dispose of the final boss**. We'll need cast-iron proof of both of these in either photographic or video form – and for the boss encounter, we'll only actually accept videos. See opposite for how to record your triumphs, and then get started.

WAVE RACE



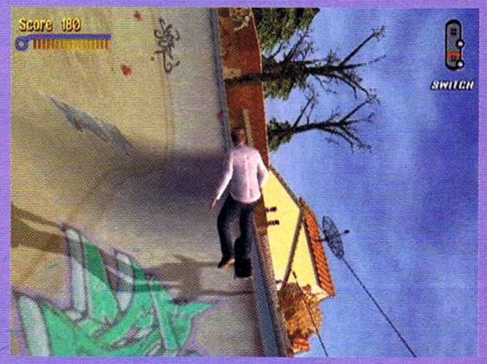
Whaddagame. Tim loves it, Geraint loves it, Greener loves it, even that damn fool Kittsy loves it, which is why we've got three tasty challenges to set you off on the right foot. We want to see **your best race time on Aspen Lake in easy mode**, plus we're also interested in **your best stunt score on Lost Temple Lagoon** and **your best lap time on Southern Island**. Fancy it? Again, we'll need cast-iron proof of your achievements – in the next generation, er, generation, video is our choice medium, though we may accept some photographic evidence as long as it isn't 'altered'.

ROGUE LEADER



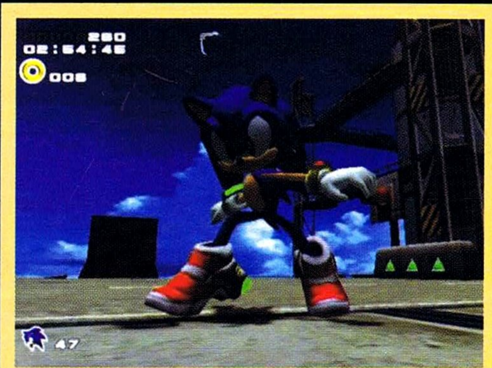
Star Wars. It's the best of things. Except for The Phantom Menace, which was pure, unadulterated crud. Fortunately, Factor 5 decided to stick close to the first trilogy with *Rogue Leader* and the effect is eye-blistering. You're just bound to have this come launch day, so we want the following: **Most kills on Battle on Endor** (remember, you must achieve a minimum of a Bronze medal), **Highest accuracy on Death Star Attack**, as well as **the fastest time achieved taking out the Star Destroyer** in Razor Rendezvous. Hey! Travelling through hyperspace ain't like dustin' crops, boy.

TONY HAWK'S 3



Yeah, yeah, yeah, we all think we can recite the rule book when it comes to grinding, ollying and spunky-twallying, but just how good are you at skateboarding Hawk-style? Well, needless to say, we'll be the judge as you try your hand at securing the **highest point score on The Foundry**, the **highest trick combo on the Canada level**, and the **highest score on the Rio level**. Remember, *Tony Hawk's 3* is blinkin' hard, so you'll need to put in the hours – once you have, get us your proof of the end screen in either photographic or, preferably, video form. Go and start loving it.

SONIC 2



Sega's spiky superhog didn't amaze us quite as much as we would have liked, but his sequel lends itself very nicely indeed to a spot of gaming glorification. (*What the hell does that mean? And why haven't I sacked you yet?* – Ed). So, we'd like you to investigate further **how many rings you can clock up at the end of the Juggernaut level** (that's the very first one), plus see **what sort of time you can notch up on Escape from the Military Base** – only the fastest need apply. We'll need video evidence for both of these beauties, so you better get that VHS working.

CRAZY TAXI



Here's one we like. Okay, it's a bit old now, but it's still great fun and about as ripe for challenging as any launch game out there. Which means we want you to see **how much money you can nab in the Ten Minute Mode, what your longest jump is in Crazy Jump**, and what **your highest Crazy Drift combo** is. Here, we'll accept photo or video evidence, but we won't accept 'fiddled-with' photos (don't think we won't notice – we've banished you before and we'll do it again) and we won't accept bribes, either. Well, it depends how much you're offering, but probably not.

LOOK! ALL THE INFO YOU'LL NEED RIGHT HERE!



Can you beat Greener's score of 125,140,000G on my game? Can you, traggots!

WE WANT YOUR TIMES!

RULES EXPLAINED...

Anyone familiar with NGC over the past 67 issues will know that we were the FIRST magazine in the world to give our readers the opportunity to compete against each other with I'm The Best. Such was the response, that it soon spawned Skill Club 64, and then one-offs such as the *Mario Kart*, *Lylat Wars* and *GoldenEye* challenges. Without blowing our own trumpet... oh, what the hell. We do this thing bigger and better than any other mag. Always have, always will.

Which is why we're particularly excited about the next generation of game challenges, to be introduced in the very next issue of NGC – the buffed-up, bigged-up, ultra-polished, infinitely better NGC, we might add. We've spent months coming up with new ideas for our challenge section and we think we've nailed it. Over the coming months and years, NGC's challenges will build into the most comprehensive, most competitive, most entertaining library of interaction you've ever seen. It's going to be ace.

In the meantime, as soon as you get hold of your Gamecube and games, we want you to start messing around with the six beautiful little wonders over on the left there, as well as any others you might fancy. We've given you a bit of an idea of what games we thought would be ripe for our leagues, but we're open to suggestions. If you want to prove your worth on another game, such as *Burnout* or *ISS*, then send in a time or an achievement and we'll see whether any other NGC readers are mailing similar scores.

If you're especially keen, you'll be wanting to know how you prove your achievements and get them into us as fast as possible. Well, here's how it all works:

TO TAKE PHOTOS

Point the camera at the screen and click away. For best results, turn off or cover up the flash (it will reflect on the screen), make sure there's no sunlight pouring in and use a fast film – a 200 ASA or even a 400. With a digicam, use a slower shutter speed, we would.

TAKING VIDEOS

1. Take the lead that connects your Gamecube to your TV and plug it into the Signal In socket on the back of your video recorder.
2. Connect the Signal Out socket on your video to your TV and turn both on.
3. Switch your TV to the video channel and switch on your GC with a game disc in.
4. Find a spare channel on the video's tuning mechanism and look for the signal.
5. Complete the challenge, and record the appropriate result screen.
6. If you need to tape the whole challenge, just record it from the start.
7. Rewind tape.



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STAR LETTER

'OFFING'

In your recent *Metroid Prime* preview, you said "shooting aliens is never as satisfying as shooting humans." Why? It seems like nobody had a preference on the subject and then as soon as *Perfect Dark* came out, we all suddenly preferred offing humans.

Having different enemies means that there is more variety, you don't know what to expect and you are forced to work out different strategies. It also makes boss fights more interesting: we all know how to take out a human, but what about a screen-filling monster?

Don't get me wrong, I love *GoldenEye* and *PD*, but the reason they were great was because of excellent game design and programming, and nothing to do with the type of enemy you had to kill.

Andrew McGrae, Southport

Good points... but we still disagree. Part of the reason GoldenEye *and* PD *were so great was because you did know what your enemies were going to do – and how they would react. Pumping a bullet into one of* PD*'s human foes was priceless, as in* GoldenEye*. Humans are far more interesting than aliens because they react in ways we're familiar with, can identify with, and laugh at. Monsters just aren't as satisfying.* **Ed**



TXT US

Use modern technology to get us on the move...

07764 175921

Only 150 quid! And it comes out on my bday 2! WOOPY DOO! Paul

n64= nintendo 64 ngc= nintendo gamecube. that's genius! frm snapking

nu zelda has got crapics not graphics lee

shigsy! u got it wrong long games are better e.g zelda frm jason

gamecube beats ps2 and xbox



Sonic: you disagreed with our views on the music... but few disagreed with our 70 per cent verdict.

'MUSIC I'

Your *Sonic Adventure* review, then. What about the Emblem-collecting system? What about the special Chaos that let you get into a secret area? What about the Green Hill Zone adaptation? And the music! I thought Geraint was a self-confessed Sega fan.

Robert Zwetsloof, via email

'MUSIC II'

Having played *Sonic Adventure 2* on the ill-fated Dreamcast I can honestly say you've criminally underrated it. One of the arguments you levelled at it was about the music, which I find inexcusable considering the amazing City Escape tune and the classic sound effects.

Phillip Hollier-Day, Bristol

'MUSIC III'

I was annoyed with your *Sonic Adventure 2* review where you called the music 'nasty rock' – and I think your comments about just having to push Up to complete the game are a little unfair too. Towards the end the levels start getting pretty complicated and interesting, and, in my opinion, *SA2* is a high-class game, and one that has had more thought put into its plot and structure than any of the *Mario* titles. (*Are you sure? – Ed.*)

Daniel Cole, via e-mail

Okay, okay, a lot of it comes down to personal taste, of course – as with anything music-related – but even if you love Hasslehoff-stashed German-style rock, you couldn't fail to



'GERMAN COPIES'

I saw *Lylat Wars* at Toys R Us for £4.99! I thought it was a class bargain too, so I bought it. But in the car, I ripped open the box to glance at the manual, and guess what? It was in German! GERMAN! I took it back, and they said they had a wrong delivery and had a pile of German copies. I wanted to know if there were any English manuals, so the manager was called down. He wasn't much good. Here's what he said: "Mmmuuuuuuurrrrrrrrmururmrumurmurmur, they shouldn't be on display, mmmmurmmmmmurrrrrrrrmmmmuuuurrrrrr, the staff took them down, urmmurrrmmmmmmm uuuuurrrmmmururm." I'm so angry I banged my head on my bedroom wall. I'll be out of hospital in three months.
Andrew Parker, via email

Sounds like Toys R Us might have accidentally sent down a dalek instead of the manager, but they'll try anything to get rid of you, the scamps. I tripped over a spilled pile of Barbies in the frankly terrifying Plymouth branch once – when I tried to find a member of staff, I found them all hiding behind some Cabbage Patch Kids attempting not to be spotted. Ah, well. It's funny how things turn out, eh? **Ed**



The beautiful little beast that is Lylat Wars. Not quite as good in German, mind.

be appalled by SA2's mostly terrible tunes. They're not even good in an ironic way. They're just plain rubbish. As for the game… well, we're sticking to our guns with this. We love Sega games to bits, and simply can't wait for Monkey Ball *and* Phantasy Star, *but* Sonic 2 *just isn't as good as everyone makes out – it's not even as good as the first Dreamcast outing. That's not to say it's not good fun, but it's pretty limited, boringly structured and for the most part unsurprising. That said, we'd still welcome Sonic back for a threequel with open arms.* **Ed**

'COUNTY BORDER'

I'd like to correct the correction made by Stephen Carvell in Correction Corner (**NGC**/65). He wrongly corrected you: Twycross is in Leicestershire NOT Warwickshire – you can look on any road map to see this. Twycross is about a mile from the county border.
James Lovatt, Leicester

Right. We checked this out once and for all using an atlas and you're right. Twycross is in Leicestershire, close to the border. So let that be the end of this infernal argument. (Rustle). Wait a second, it says here that Twycross is in Warwickshire. So you're wrong! WRONG! Ha. Only joking, of course. Or am I? **Ed**

'STUPID GLOBE'

Do you like my picture? I thought Worldy Bloke was a bit old, so I've drawn you a new mascot. Look! It's got your logo on and everything! He's called **NGC** Bunny, and I hope you replace that stupid globe with this.
John Kendall, via email

I'm going to be honest with you here. This is rubbish. Absolute, total, stinking rubbish. **Ed**

CORRECTION CORNER

In his *Sonic Advance* review on page 34 of **NGC**/65, Geraint states that Sonic collects 'coins', when in fact (as everyone knows) he collects rings. Please thwapp him for me.
Daniel Russell, Gibraltar

Certainly will. (Thwapp). Will that do? **Ed**



A correction to a correction in Correction Corner in **NGC**/65 – you admitted you spelled trés bon, tray bon. That's wrong. WRONG.
Michael Hooner, Oxford

Tray bon, YOU PETITE PUTZ. WE KNOW WE SPELLED IT WRONG. **Ed**

In **NGC**/65, I was reading Mailbox when I noticed a letter from Greg Thomas that attributed the *Legend of Zelda* song to System of a Down. Being a loyal SOAD fan, I must tell you it is not by them, but by a band called Rabbit Joint.
Martin Newman, via email

Rabbit Joint, you say? Still sounds rubbish. **Ed**

In issue 64, on page 83, you showed a picture of a smashed up Gamecube moneybox – and pouring out of the box were some coins, two Pokémon tazos and a MARBLE. But how can a marble fit in the Gamecube moneybox slot? It's absolutely tiny.
Callum Gray, via email

It'll go in if you force it. **Ed**

In **NGC**/65, you wrote that Martin Bristow got a time of 0'00"00 in the Koopa Race in *Mario 64*. Surely that's simply impossible!
Andrew Bell, Co Durham

He's just really good. **Ed**

BONUS LETTERS

If there's one thing I don't get is Bonus Letters. Explain.
Thomas Phipps, via email

You won't get it if I do. **Ed**

Guess what was number one?
Rhodri Jervis, Swansea

Will from Pop Idol? **Ed**

Shigsy thinking about Europe is like George W Bush having a friendly pint with Bin Laden.
Luke Greenway, Norfolk

Weeeell, not really. **Ed**

Does Paul get paid less than the rest of you? I mean, he hasn't had his hair cut in ages.
Kat Tromans, via email

That's because he's a tramp. **Ed**

Don't give up the good stuff.
Michael Brett, via email

And live the dream. (Wretch). **Ed**

Have you ever noticed how the Shy Guy with the spinning blades on his head (from *Yoshi's Story*) looks like Leatherface from The Texas Chainsaw Massacre?
Pete Millwood, via email

No. **Ed**

You obviously haven't been to one of the new Sainsburys.
Owen Englemeister, via email

No, but Tesco's is nice. **Ed**

Enjoy life while you still can.
James Temperton, via email

Uh... okay. Is that a threat? **Ed**

I don't think *Perfect Dark Zero* would be an E for Everybody.
Ash Phillips, Surrey

No, it'll be a D for Delayed. **Ed**

I think it's about time you invested in a four-foot whipping device to control Jud and Paul.
Joseph Murphy, Co. Cork

Not a bad idea. **Ed**

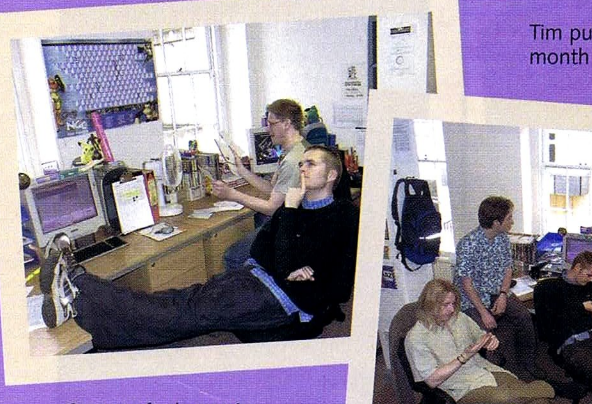
It would be a great advert for a film about Link. Think about it.
Cedric Van Rossem, Belgium

Thought about it. Nope. **Ed**



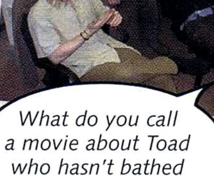
GRINTENDO

Win a game of your choice! All you have to do is tell us a Nintendo-related joke – and make us laugh. This month: **Jesse Loxton** of **Perth, Western Oz**



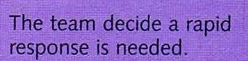
Tim puts his feet up this month and lets Greener choose a gag.

Greener finds one he thinks everyone will enjoy.



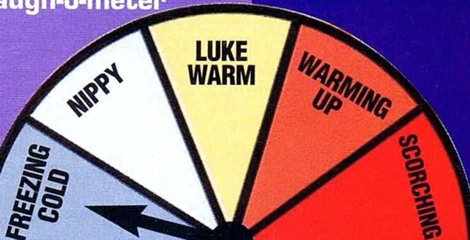
Everyone gives it some thought… but no one knows.

Lord of the Fungi!



The team decide a rapid response is needed.





Got a great Nintendo-related joke? Then write to us at Grintendo, Mailbox, **NGC** Magazine, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW or alternatively email ngc@futurenet.co.uk putting **Grintendo** in the subject line.

UNSUCCESSFUL

PROBABLY THE WORST JOKE WE'VE EVER HEARD.

'PUFF'

I was looking through my old **NGC**s when I came across a peculiar letter in issue 50, which was saying how Link appeared in an episode of the Powerpuff Girls. Look at the picture! It's the new Zelda – cel-shaded and all!
Ross Spearman, via email

Nice eyes, young 'un. **Ed**

'BROWSING'

I was just browsing through the Radio Times when I came across a 1969 film called A Man Called Gannon. Just a coincidence… or something more?
Jeremy Young, via email



Yeah, you're going to like this: it's a story about a seasoned cowboy taking a young pretender under his wing… but things soon go wrong, and the two become bitter enemies. Sounds familiar? Thought not. Still, the tag line is worth turning up for. On the movie poster it says, "He battled an empire of barbed wire and bullets." Whatever that means. **Ed**

'DOZEN EGGS'

Having owned a US Gamecube since Christmas, I can safely say it is indeed the best console ever. Anyway, I found this sticker on my latest purchase of a dozen eggs. Best before Mario. Ha.
Darren Shelley, Hull

Ha. **Ed**

Mazza gets egg-cited about farm produce. Ahem. You hate us now, right?

DISPLAY UNTIL MAR03
BEST BEFORE MAR10

'CROSSROADS'

Game Boy Advance was on Eastenders and Crossroads this month! It was being played by some Spanish bloke in the episode where Peggy bumped into Frank, and in Crossroads Scott received a game for his. His dad, Jake, asked him if they could play against each other but Scott said the game was for

SO TELL ME THIS

1. Will American GBA games be able to link up with UK Gamecube games?
2. Are there any plans for releasing Gamecube versions of *Mario Golf* and *Mario Tennis*?
3. Any news on a *Zelda* GBA game?
Ruari McBride, Belfast

1. Yep indeed. There's no regional lock-out on Game Boy games of any description. So you can get importing.
2. Yo' damn right, as Puff Daddy might say. If you cast your eager peepers back a few pages to our previews section, you can see the very first screenshots for yourself.
3. Nope. We'll keep you up to date.



1. Will *Horse Racing Derby* or *Winning Post* get a UK GBA release?
2. Will a US pad work on a UK GC?



3. I called Rare and asked about GBA games, and was told *Donkey Kong World* was planned – but then the guy I spoke to said that it wasn't a Game Boy Advance game. I phoned back to ask if it was a Gamecube game and he said it hadn't been confirmed as of yet. What do you think?
Andy Simmonds, Waterlooville

1. Wouldn't count on it.
2. Yep. No problems, there.
3. It's probably a GBA game, but then Rare like to play little games, they do. The cheeky pranksters. Keep your peepers peeled for an announcement on this at E3 in May.

1. Will *Metroid Prime* be four-player?
2. How about quoting game prices in your magazine in pounds and euros?



If Crossroads is anything to go by, the GBA and GC aren't compatible. Spanners.

GBA and not GBC, so they couldn't link up. A bit uneducated, aren't they?
Keeley Wilson, via email

Greener wanted to celebrate this inspired piece of eagle-eyed spotting by doing his Frank Butcher 'impression' for around three hours. We tied him to his squeaky spinny chair and threw him out of the window in our new second-floor office. He didn't do the impression very much after that. **Ed**

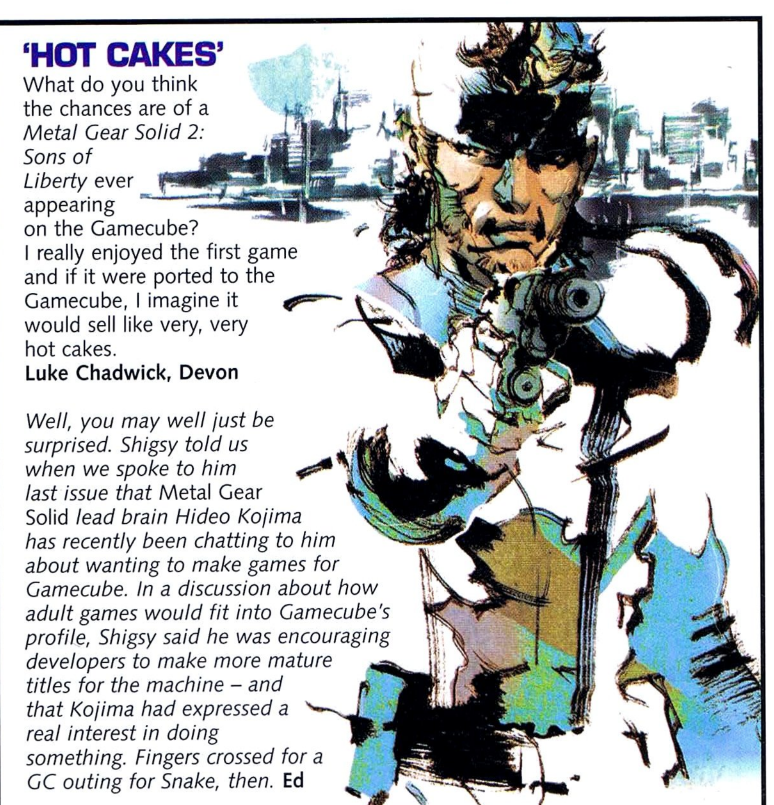
'VERY SIMILAR'

Just a quick query: can you tell me whether Geraint Evans is any relation to James Evans who I work with in the Solihull Transco office? Geraint and James look very similar, but James is terrifying, so I daren't ask him about it.
Stephen Cavell, Birmingham

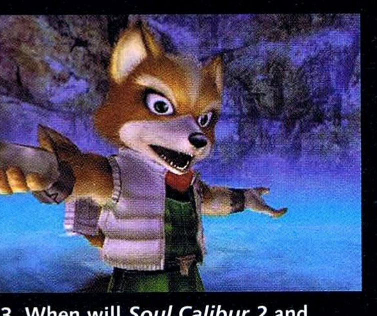
Geraint is, in fact, not from Solihull but Swansea. It's a disgusting hell-hole in the Nexus G solar system. **Ed**

'HOT CAKES'

What do you think the chances are of a *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty* ever appearing on the Gamecube? I really enjoyed the first game and if it were ported to the Gamecube, I imagine it would sell like very, very hot cakes.
Luke Chadwick, Devon



Well, you may well just be surprised. Shigsy told us when we spoke to him last issue that Metal Gear Solid lead brain Hideo Kojima has recently been chatting to him about wanting to make games for Gamecube. In a discussion about how adult games would fit into Gamecube's profile, Shigsy said he was encouraging developers to make more mature titles for the machine – and that Kojima had expressed a real interest in doing something. Fingers crossed for a GC outing for Snake, then. **Ed**



3. When will *Soul Calibur 2* and *Starfox Adventures* be coming out?
Ciarán O'Mara, Dublin

1. Almost certainly.
2. Good idea. We'll start that from next issue if all goes to plan.
3. Winter and autumn respectively, providing there's no more slippage.

1. Looking at your list of UK launch games. I noticed *Extreme G3* wasn't among them. What the Sam Hill is going on here, you guys?
2. What's happening with the Wavebird? Will you be able to get that with Gamecube instead of the purple smoothie?
Stephen Mirfin, The United Kingdom



1. It's coming out in May, but it's not going to be a launch game. Acclaim say sorry, the little pranksters.



2. Later on in the Gamecube's life, yes. We'd expect it closer to Christmas time.

1. Are Rare ever likely to do another Bond game?
2. Is there ever going to be a *Snowboard Kids* for Gamecube, do you think?
Stuart Masterton, Milton Keynes

1. No way. Sorry.
2. That would be great but, alas, we fear not. Shame, that.

GAMECUBE LAB



How does Gamecube work? We'll examine a new piece of the miracle machine in every issue. This month...

SOUND CHIP

THEY CALL IT FLIPPER

We gave Gamecube's graphics chip, codenamed Flipper, a thorough going over in NGC/56's Gamecube Lab. But what we didn't tell you is that it's a dual-purpose slab of metal – a small chip designed by Japanese company Macronix rides on the back of it and performs all Gamecube's sound-related functions. What a clever beast Flipper is!



Try muting the volume on your telly while playing *Wave Race: Blue Storm* or *Star Wars: Rogue Leader*, and you'll realise just how heavily games rely on supreme sonics to bring the experience to life. So how does a tiny box like Gamecube create larger-than-life audio loveliness? Find out here...

SOUNDS GREAT

LEADS: THE WAY

What you need for ear-treating Gamecube sonics.

To get the best sound performance out of Gamecube, the first thing you should do is throw away that TV lead that comes in the box and invest in a decent composite lead. The red and white ends plug into the left and right inputs on audio kit (such as the CD inputs on a tape deck) to give crisp, stereo sound. Alternatively, you could shell out on a proper amplifier and speaker set-up for spine-tingling surround sound from games such as Luigi's Mansion. Failing all that, simply plug a pair of headphones into your telly for noticeably better aurals.

DOLBY EXPLAINED

UP TO 11

A crash course in how to produce mono, stereo and surround sounds.

DOLBY SURROUND
Supported by GC: Yes
Luigi's Mansion and Wave Race: Blue Storm output in this format, but you'll need to plug your Gamecube into a Pro Logic decoder and at least three surround sound speakers to hear it. It's fairly basic.

DOLBY DIGITAL 5.1
Supported by GC: No
Or 'proper' surround sound, as used in cinemas until 1993. Xbox and some DVDs output this, but you need a fancy extra lead, a 5.1-compatible amp and six speakers to feel like you're actually there.

DOLBY SURROUND PRO LOGIC II

DOLBY PRO LOGIC II
Supported by GC: Yes
As used in Rogue Leader, this is a new system that gives you near-5.1 quality, through a Pro Logic II decoder and six speakers, but using a normal red and white audio lead.

DOLBY SURROUND®

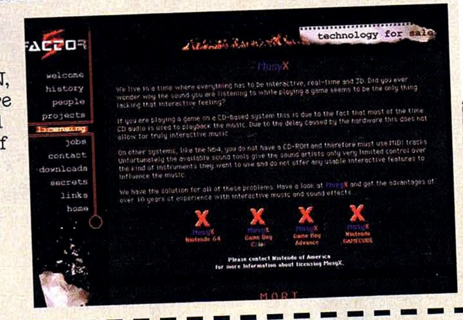
MUSYX FOR THE PEOPLE

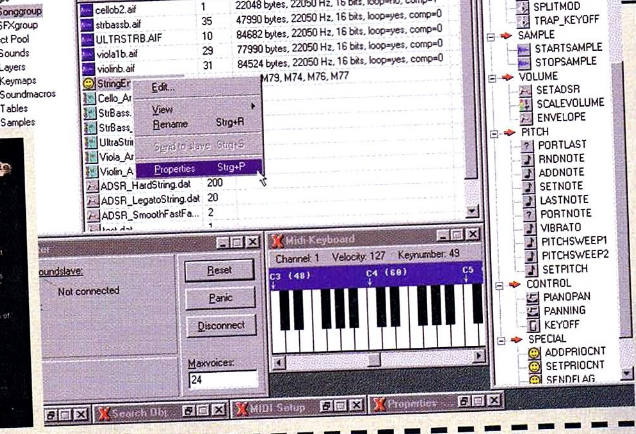
FULL FACTOR

Lucky for Nintendo, Factor 5 already had the best tunes...



Originally called Mosys until Nintendo themselves nicked the name for Gamecube's memory system, Musyx is a music-creation and sound-fiddling tool created by Factor 5. Two years in development, it's now officially licensed out by The Big N, and therefore the favoured sound tool of most Gamecube developers. Advantages include Dolby Surround support and complete control over every aspect of a game's sounds from the one screen. Best of all, because a near-identical version of MusyX was available for N64, developers can set to work on Gamecube audio magic with the minimum of hassle.





HOLD UP

Factor 5 claim that 'latency' is the reason Nintendo didn't build Dolby Digital capabilities directly into Gamecube. "Latency is the time between something triggering a sound and the sound actually hitting the speakers," explains Thomas Engel. "Dolby Digital is designed with pre-produced movies in mind, so they didn't have to worry about keeping latency low. As it is, though, 5.1's latency is actually too high to be acceptable for interactive game audio." The Xbox's Halo seems to manage pretty well, though...

EVERYONE STREAM

Gamecube doesn't just produce its own music – it can also 'stream' audio tracks recorded on a game disc...



STANDARD STREAMING

Developers can record a CD-quality track right onto the Gamecube's teeny disc, and then suck it straight off to pump it out in-game.

MULTI-TRACK STREAMING

Gamecube can stream more than one track at once, so it can overlay different tracks or fade them into each other.

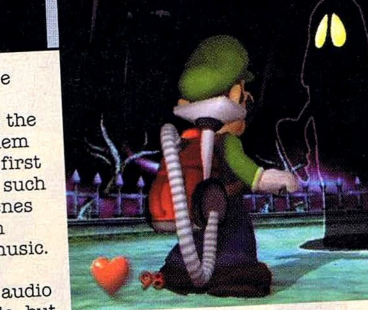
AUDIO-DATA INTEGRATION

Streaming audio doesn't prevent Gamecube accessing game data. Levels can be loaded while music is playing in the background.

AUDIO 'ASSLE



Ghosts in Nintendo's purple machine?



Our Japanese Gamecube experienced the odd sonic problem or two during its first few weeks of life – such as one of the cut-scenes in Luigi's Mansion playing without music. We haven't experienced any audio glitches for a while, but we'd be interested to hear from any NGC readers who've shared in similar experiences on import or UK Gamecubes.

GAMECUBE SOUND CHIP TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Sound Processor: Custom Macronix 16-bit DSP
Instruction Memory: 8KB RAM + 8KB ROM
Data Memory: 8KB RAM + 4KB ROM
Clock Frequency: 81 MHz
Performance: 64 simultaneous channels, ADPCM encoding
Sampling Frequency: 48KHz

TECH SPECS

Meaningless sound chip features de-jargonized. Be grateful!

SIMULTANEOUS CHANNELS
How many 'voices' Gamecube can sing with at once – although Factor 5's Thomas Engel describes this as "the bare minimum," citing 100 channels as a more likely achievable number.

ADPCM ENCODING
A method of squeezing sound data so it takes up less space – a bit like MP3, although not as efficient. GC's sound chip recognizes and 'decompresses' ADPCM sounds sent to it.

SAMPLING FREQUENCY
A direct measure of the quality of Gamecube's sound. 48KHz is standard for consoles, being just above CD quality. Thing is, with anything above 20KHz the human ear can't tell the difference anyway.

FUTURE SOUND OF...

Gamecube's visuals will improve as the years roll by – but so will its sonic performance...





- Because movies streamed off a Gamecube disc can feature Dolby Digital 5.1, it's not totally implausible that a third-party manufacturer will release a Gamecube Digital Audio lead for top-quality surround sound.
- The flexibility and quality of Gamecube's sonic effects – reverb, for example, which can gives sounds a deep, volumizing echo – will be enhanced and tweaked by ingenious developers such as Rare and Eurocom.
- "We listen quite a bit to suggestions," says Thomas Engel, "So all Gamecube developers are getting updates [of Musyx] on a constant basis. We will expand the features throughout the life of the machine."




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EAT MUD
Kissing winter goodbye
ROUTE OF THE MONTH
HOW TO... APPRECIATE WAR POETRY PULL TRIALS MOVES DO PRE-RIDE CHECKS ORGANISE GROUP RIDES
ON SALE NOW!

LAST MONTH
IN IDEAS FACTORY WE ASKED YOU...

Q DO NINTENDO VIEW EUROPE WITH A DEEP, MALICIOUS HATRED?

EASY AS ONE, TWO, THREE
Over the past month or so I have been learning a lot of other things about Nintendo that I never knew. Here is my list of thoughts. To eclipse or to even achieve the same popularity of the SNES, Nintendo must one: do more (and better) advertising in EUROPE; two: replace Yamauchi immediately and tie up loose ends with Squaresoft; three: not let Rare slip through their fingers over such petty things as 'suggestive themes' etcetera.
Louis Closs, via email

Perfect Dark: *We had it before the Japanese. See, they do love us really.*

HARD TO SAY
I think it is difficult to say whether or not Nintendo are treating us badly. Nintendo have always pushed us around as if we were only a small market, but aren't they sending us more consoles for the Gamecube's release date than they did Japan? I did have a bad experience from Nintendo of Europe themselves when I asked them about the lack of an English-language website for English-speaking gamers. I was told that www.nintendo.co.uk had gone "missing" and there was nothing they could do about it, but was later reassured that as soon as the UK office had got itself properly set up they would start work on it. But have we had it all bad? We had *Perfect Dark* before the Japanese, despite the Japanese having a different version, and we had a virtually simultaneous launch of the Game Boy Advance between us Brits and the Americans. I think it just depends on what viewpoint you take. It's not a simple "Yes they are treating us badly" or a "No, they're just looking out for our interests."
Nathan Edgeworth, via email

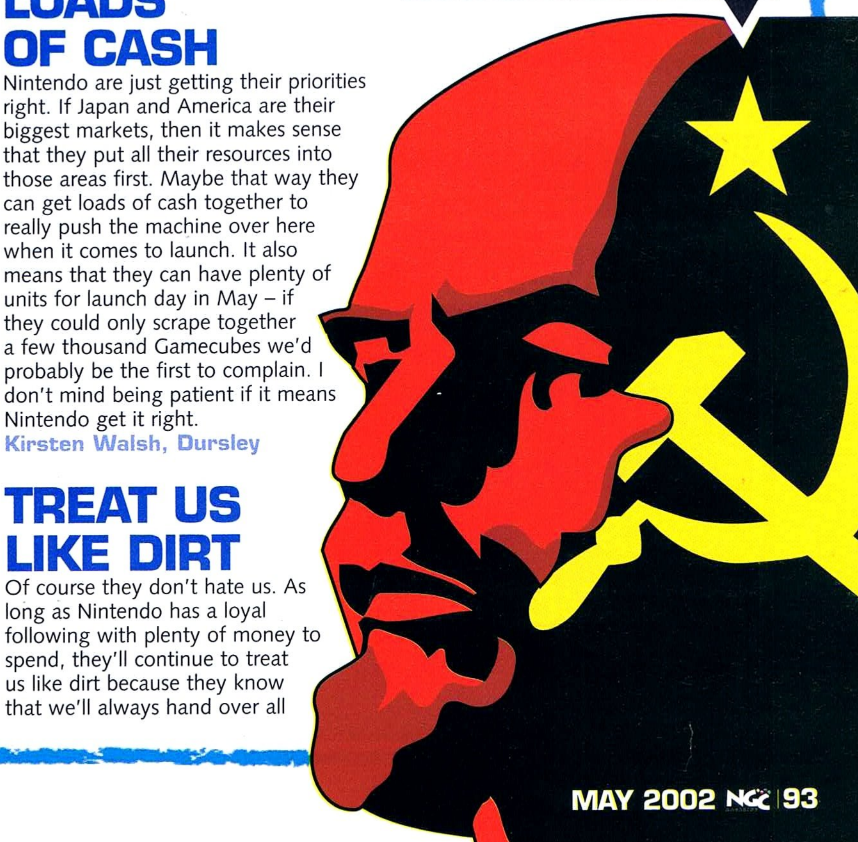
CLUELESS IDIOTS
They don't hate us, it's just that whoever is in charge of Europe is an incompetent fool who has no idea what the hell is going on. They have no idea how to advertise, and their website is full of supposedly 'brand-new' info that everyone has already seen a hundred times over. Just because Nintendo say 'we're not competing with PS2 and Xbox' they think they can just put their feet up and everyone will rush out and buy Gamecube when it comes out – they won't. Nintendo need to pull their bleedin' fingers out and start spreading the word by advertising aggressively, otherwise they'll just end up looking like a bunch of clueless idiots.
Tom North, Mansfield

LOADS OF CASH
Nintendo are just getting their priorities right. If Japan and America are their biggest markets, then it makes sense that they put all their resources into those areas first. Maybe that way they can get loads of cash together to really push the machine over here when it comes to launch. It also means that they can have plenty of units for launch day in May – if they could only scrape together a few thousand Gamecubes we'd probably be the first to complain. I don't mind being patient if it means Nintendo get it right.
Kirsten Walsh, Dursley

TREAT US LIKE DIRT
Of course they don't hate us. As long as Nintendo has a loyal following with plenty of money to spend, they'll continue to treat us like dirt because they know that we'll always hand over all our cash when the GC finally arrives. So it's not a really a case of them hating us, more like they're just pushing their luck – milking other territories before they get round to ours.
Steve Porter, via email

BLINKIN' COMMUNISTS
I think this is all to do with profit and geography. I'll explain: the games and consoles are made in Japan. That is part of the USSR *(Er... Geography Ed)*, the largest continent in the world. This also means that there will be a lot of people wanting such consoles like Gamecube. After the USSR, Nintendo move on to America because that is the second-largest continent (actually Antarctica is the second largest but there are no hardcore gamers in the freezing cold). Then Nintendo keeps going until they reach Europe, the smallest continent in the world where there will be fewer people wanting to purchase because there will be less people.
Andrew Henderson-Begg, via email

Look at any atlas and you'll see Japan is part of the evil Soviet empire. Er – nurse!



THE MAKING OF...

1080° SNOWBO

DODGEMS ON ICE



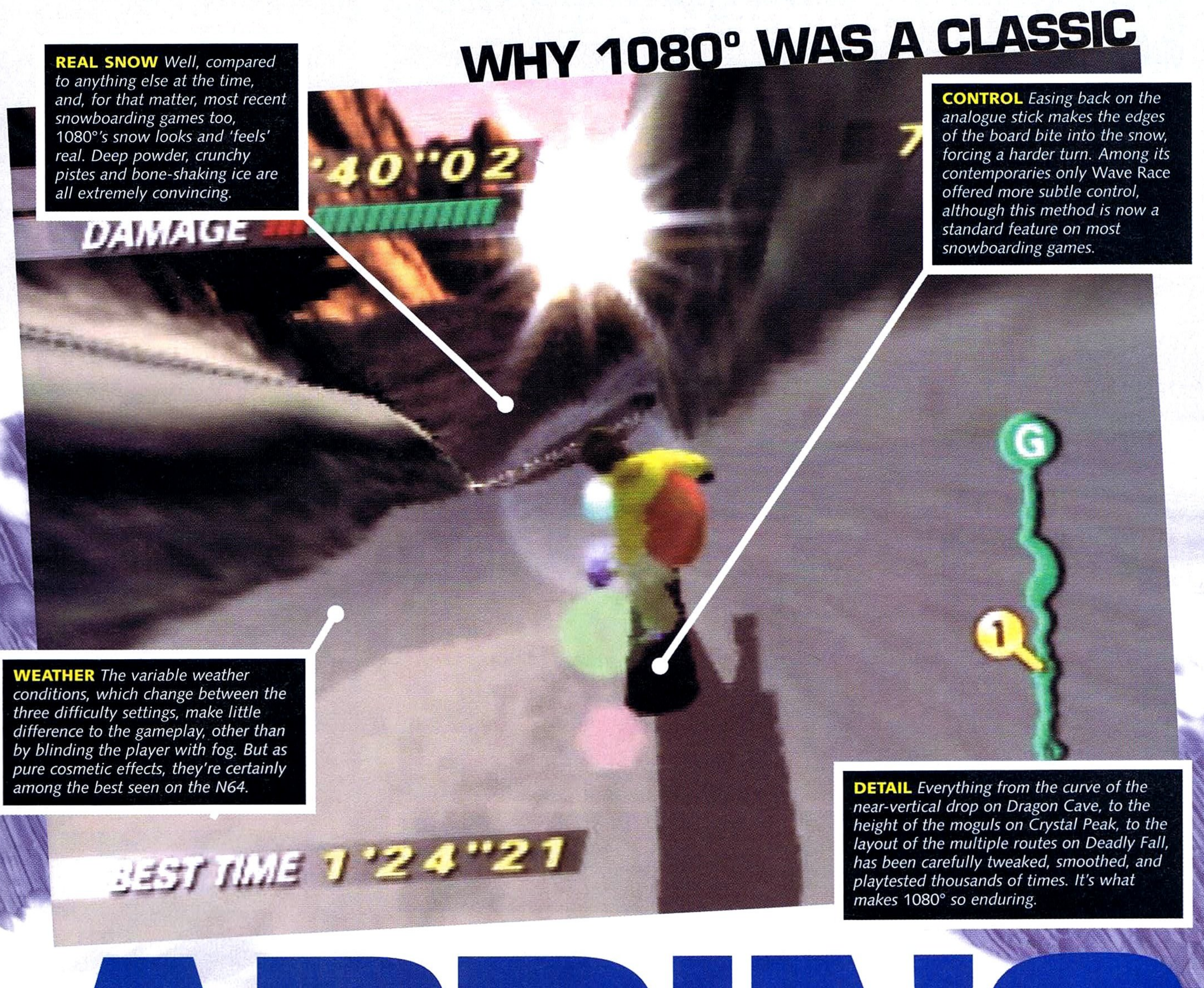
Giles Goddard and fellow programmer Colin Reed created almost the entire game engine between them, leaving only the camera control and computer AI to a third coder. Unfortunately the AI, which gives the computer just three paths to choose from, never quite worked correctly, meaning the other boarder will often crash into the player rather than take evasive action. While Goddard confesses that he probably would have handled it in much the same way, it's something that will definitely not be seen in the sequel.

"Let's make a game involving snow," said Shigeru Miyamoto. Chief coder Giles Goddard took this simple brief and created the *Wave Race* of the pistes...

While the N64 was never the machine of choice for fans of realistic racers, it was host to what remains probably the most authentic snowboard sim ever coded – *1080° Snowboarding*.

Way before the current 'adrenaline sports' trend kicked in, ex-Argonaut coder Giles Goddard met with Shigeru Miyamoto to discuss a potential snow-based game using the inverse kinematics (IK) technique he had been working on in between his regular odd-jobs on titles such as *Super Mario 64* (see NGC/61). It's a brain-twisting method of calculating realistic, unpredictable animation in real-time, which would turn out to be just the

WHY 1080° WAS A CLASSIC



REAL SNOW *Well, compared to anything else at the time, and, for that matter, most recent snowboarding games too, 1080°'s snow looks and 'feels' real. Deep powder, crunchy pistes and bone-shaking ice are all extremely convincing.*

CONTROL *Easing back on the analogue stick makes the edges of the board bite into the snow, forcing a harder turn. Among its contemporaries only Wave Race offered more subtle control, although this method is now a standard feature on most snowboarding games.*

WEATHER *The variable weather conditions, which change between the three difficulty settings, make little difference to the gameplay, other than by blinding the player with fog. But as pure cosmetic effects, they're certainly among the best seen on the N64.*

DETAIL *Everything from the curve of the near-vertical drop on Dragon Cave, to the height of the moguls on Crystal Peak, to the layout of the multiple routes on Deadly Fall, has been carefully tweaked, smoothed, and playtested thousands of times. It's what makes 1080° so enduring.*

MAGIC MOMENT
SECRET BOARDERS

Some funky reflection effects make the hidden Crystal and Gold boarders look great, but the Panda Head suit takes the award for most memorable secret character. Even stranger is the Penguin Board – literally a giant, squashed penguin that you ride down the mountain. Both were the work of artist Katsuhiko Kanno – "quite a quirky person," according to Giles Goddard.

ARDING

thing for recreating authentic high-speed tumbles on a ski slope.

The game, which actually started out as a skiing sim, was built by one of the smallest teams ever assigned to a Nintendo EAD (Entertainment, Analysis and Development) in-house project – Goddard began coding on his own, with just two artists to design the courses and graphics. Fellow Brit Colin Reed joined two months later, and the team was supplemented by a third coder halfway into its development cycle. Essentially, though, they were left to their own devices – "Nintendo didn't know themselves what kind of game they wanted to make," says Goddard, "So they gave us the reins."

The team decided to swap skis for snowboards, mainly so that tricks could be included.

The real deal

The team decided to swap skis for snowboards, mainly so that tricks could be included as well as straight racing, and the first few months were spent refining the handling of a riderless board. Goddard's experience of snowboarding in the Japanese Alps, a five-hour train journey from Nintendo's Kyoto HQ, allowed him to apply first-hand experience to the game.

"We put a lot of effort into not just using the left and right of the stick, but also allowing you to brake by pulling back. In snowboarding, half the time you're not trying to go down the hill – you're trying to stop yourself going down the hill. If you look at the slalom snowboarders in the Olympics, you'll see they're trying to *stop* themselves going fast. That's what fun about snowboarding in general."

That the early demos met with an enthusiastic reception from Miyamoto and Nintendo's directors was much to the team's relief. "We had put our foot down from the start about no cutesy, character-based stuff," explains Goddard. "That was the biggest hurdle we faced from EAD. They'd never done a game like that, and they weren't up for it. But we were such a small team, and Nintendo were such a big company, that if it didn't work it was gonna be peanuts to them. Nintendo take lots of risks internally, and many unusual, off-beat projects are cancelled without anyone on the outside ever hearing about them."

That strange man

Miyamoto's own contribution to the project was the method for landing after making a jump – you have to press the Z-trigger to bend the rider's knees and absorb the impact. "We just thought it was one of those weird ideas at first," chuckles Goddard. "We put it in anyway – not to make him happy, but because he knows what he's talking about, even if nobody else does."

As inevitably happens with all games, certain elements fell by the

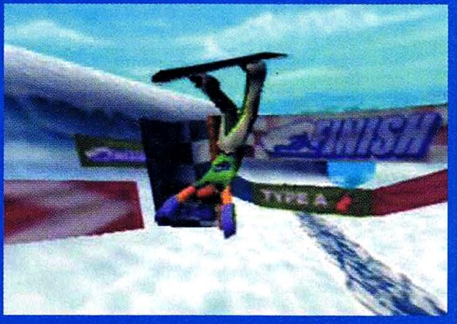
MAGIC MOMENT
DEADLY FALL

Deadly indeed. The most enormous jump in the game sees you plummeting off the edge of a massive cliff, promptly leaving your stomach behind back at the top of the ridge. The rest of 1080° Snowboarding isn't always so extravagant, though. "Less experienced coders often think an exhilarating game is all about vertical drops, but it's more about straddling the line between keeping it real and making it exciting," thinks Giles Goddard. "If you manage to get close to that line, then that's when you've made a good course."



WHO'S IN CHARGE HERE?





At the same time Giles Goddard's team was working on *1080°*, a complete lack of communication meant Nintendo was also funding a third-party snowboarding project by Boss, with a view to publishing it. As soon as the mix-up was revealed, Nintendo's support was cut back in order to clear the way for *1080°*, and the remains of Boss's game eventually appeared as *Twisted Edge* – described in **NGC**/24 as "A poor man's *1080°*," appropriately enough.

SMOKE AND MIRRORS



The reason the game features snowboards instead of skis is specifically to allow for tricks. But 1080°'s stunt system is quite staggeringly hard, proving frustrating for many players.



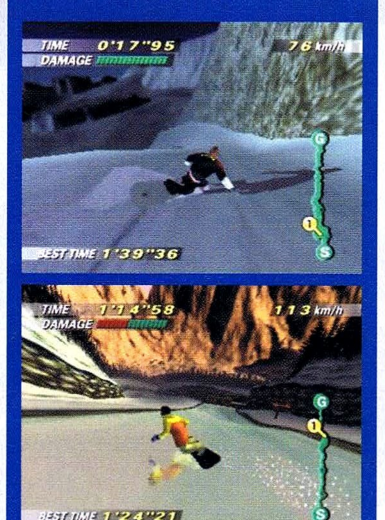
A gentle half-pipe training area introduces you to all of the available moves – a total of 29 if you include the flips and tweaks that only the Panda Head suit can attempt.



The Air Make course, a short ramp that launches the boarder into a single, huge leap, is the place to go if you think you've got the hang of linking those moves together. But check this out...



...the game's signature stunt, the 1080°: press R, rotate the stick, R again, rotate again, press B, press R, rotate, hold B, tap Z... oh, and don't forget the landing. Yeah, right!







LITTLE DEVIL

1080° Snowboarding might have only six courses (according to Giles, Shigeru Miyamoto would have preferred just one, set around a single giant mountain), but they're fiendishly well designed, and packed with detail. Artist Katsuhiko Kanno began with a flat polygon 'mesh', pushing and pulling it to create rocks, walls, and other objects, before dropping textures over the top. Following that, months of playtesting and fine-tuning, even during the final debugging stage, ensured that some of *1080° Snowboarding*'s individual courses were lavished with more care and attention than lesser games receive in their entirety.

wayside during development. Most disappointingly for Goddard, the processing power required to implement full inverse kinematics proved to be beyond the N64's capability, and in the final version only the riders' legs have a touch of IK applied to them.

Two additional CPU opponents were also removed, leaving just one rival to compete against. The team wasn't too bothered about that, since including the additional riders would have meant having to reduce some of the graphical detail. Plus, they had noticed that during the more competitive four-man races, the playtesters were ignoring the game's painstakingly crafted physics, in favour of simply hustling down the slopes ahead of the computer riders.

A critical disaster

With *1080°* close to completion, the team had a worrying moment when Mario Club, the group that tests and rates all Nintendo games prior to release, awarding the game a shockingly low score of around 60 per cent. Goddard blames this on the fact that most of Mario Club are long-time Nintendo fans, who weren't sure what to make of his PlayStation-style realistic sports sim. Besides, Nintendo was always more interested in releasing *1080°* in America, where it would find a more welcoming Western audience. "It would have probably done a lot better in Japan if it was more cutesy," laments Goddard.

Of course, it proved more than successful enough to warrant a sequel. If you're wondering what to expect from the GC version, Goddard cites *Dark Summit* as one of the best of the new wave of snowboard titles. "That's what I wanted to do with *1080°* to start off with. One of the great things about snowboarding is the ability to go wherever you like. It'd be nice to create a game where you can make your own course by picking your way down the mountain, and nowadays you can do that. Probably the main reason that hasn't happened yet is if you give too much freedom, people end up doing the same thing every time, and think the game's boring. Somehow you have to force the different levels and courses on the player..." **NGC**

LEVEL TOUR
MOUNTAIN VILLAGE























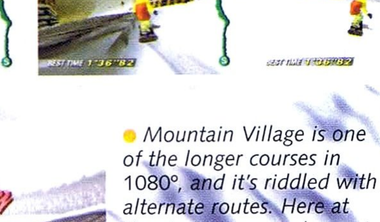




MAGIC MOMENT: CONTEST MODE

An all-round challenge for anyone whose speed and trick skills are up to scratch. Three slalom courses, with stunt bonuses along the way, the Air Make ramp, and a half-pipe for freestyle displays of joystick jockery. Man/boy separation begins here.





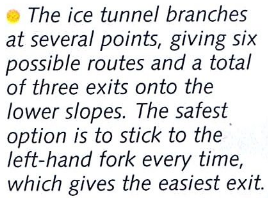
1 ● Mountain Village is one of the longer courses in 1080°, and it's riddled with alternate routes. Here at the start, you can choose to follow the ravine straight ahead, or slide up onto the ridge to the left for a more difficult challenge.



2 ● Travelling through the hut gives you the chance to make a huge leap, cutting out some of the hazardous bumps on the steep slope below. If you're going for trick points, this is the option to take.



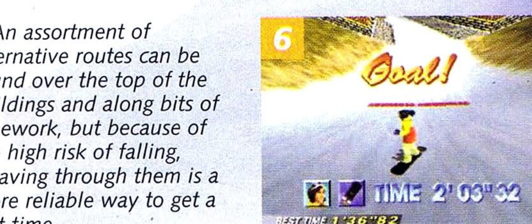
3 ● The ice tunnel branches at several points, giving six possible routes and a total of three exits onto the lower slopes. The safest option is to stick to the left-hand fork every time, which gives the easiest exit.



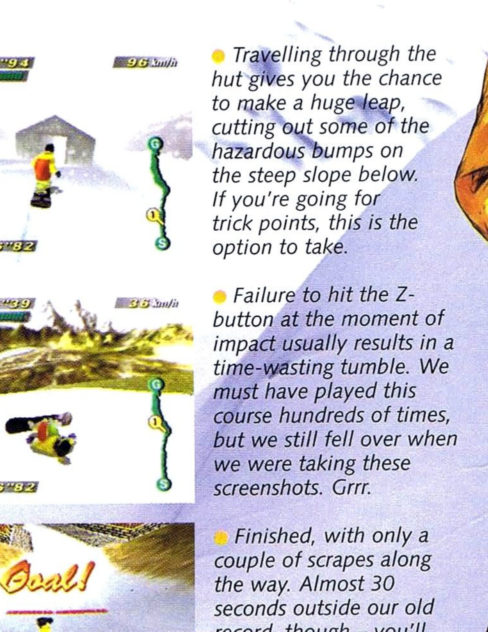
4 ● Failure to hit the Z-button at the moment of impact usually results in a time-wasting tumble. We must have played this course hundreds of times, but we still fell over when we were taking these screenshots. Grrr.



5 ● An assortment of alternative routes can be found over the top of the buildings and along bits of pipework, but because of the high risk of falling, weaving through them is a more reliable way to get a fast time.

6 ● Finished, with only a couple of scrapes along the way. Almost 30 seconds outside our old record, though – you'll find 1080° very tough if you're dusting down the cart to play for the first time in years...





Obituaries

Its glorious show kept the world entertained - but success came at a terrible price.

Nintendo 64

The Nintendo 64, which has died, aged just under nine years, from being crushed by a binman's lorry, kept audiences of the last generation thoroughly entertained with its handsome looks and cheekily playful nature. But success for the Japanese star came at a terrible price.

Born 'Project Reality' in late 1994 in Kyoto, Japan to parents Shigeru Miyamoto and Hiroshi Yamauchi, it experienced a torturous upbringing, locked in a cold, sterile room and forbidden from seeing or speaking to the general public.

According to Andrew Morton's seminal biography, *Putting the Cart before the Horse Sense*, Miyamoto spent every waking hour with his new baby – in sharp contrast to Yamauchi's emotionless parenting. "Hiroshi wasn't interested in playing games," he wrote. "He was counting the days until his new offspring was ready to go out into the world and make money for the family."

Despite Shigeru's claustrophobic obsession with keeping Project Reality away from the outside world "until he's ready", Hiroshi's cold impatience – and merciless scarlet-faced beatings – won through. Through brief public outings, the two-year-old, nicknamed 'Ultra 64' by friends, developed a cult following. In 1996, it reinvented itself as 'Nintendo 64', and began a worldwide tour, commencing in Tokyo's Akihabra district and supported by high-flying stunt team Pilotwings and Chuckle Brothers-style duo The Mario Brothers.



The N64, moments before its cruel demise under the wheels of a bin lorry.

Press and public alike were bewitched, but the euphoria was short-lived. Quickly developing a reputation as "troublesome to work with" and "too big a risk," the Nintendo 64 saw financial and creative support soon dry up. "The momentum was lost," recalled Morton. "All that little guy wanted was to be loved, but the big investors looked at Nintendo 64 with eyes as cold as Yamauchi's icy heart". Wracked with loneliness and paranoia, the Nintendo 64 complained in private that the ever-worsening situation was "all a load of PS."

Finding it difficult to travel – many visits to Europe were delayed or cancelled for no good reason, and its displays here looked pale and lethargic – the Nintendo 64 relied on enthusiasm in America, and support from seasoned acts such as Fox McCloud And The Useless Co-pilots and medieval troupe The Legend of Zelda. But the public was growing increasingly impatient with increasingly irregular and lacklustre performances, and the promise of new 'adult' material from The Mario Bros seemed a desparate step.

In 1999, the Nintendo 64 experienced a resurgence on the back of brief worldwide insanity over 151 unintelligible coloured blobs, and the award-winning slogan "Do not underestimate the power of Pokémon," courtesy of marketing guru Dick Francis. But when, in 2000, Shigeru Miyamoto and Hiroshi Yamauchi announced that they had conceived a new child, named Gamecube, the Nintendo 64's fate seemed sealed.

The sound of nails being banged into coffins rang out when European stand-up David Gosen took his notorious 'Nintendo Show' on the road in late 2001, bringing the house down with quips like "*Mario Party 3* should give retailers cause for cheer this Christmas!" and "The future is bright for Nintendo 64!"

The Nintendo 64 is survived by the analogue stick, the Rumble Pak, and the 3D platformer.

Rigsby McDougall

Nintendo 64, videogames console, born 1993; died May 3 2002.

Appreciations: Roy Porter

Jack Pole writes: I first heard of Roy Porter (obitu... | able duty of going round...